The Nation

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ON TRIAL: U.S. NARCOTICS POLICY

Noriega in Miami

MICHAEL MASSING

It was billed as the drug trial of the century . . . (Page 697)

'October Surprise'

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Answering the debunkers. (Page 694)

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EDITORIAL

FAST-FOOD POLITICS

The compromise on unemployment benefits is playing in the press as an example of Congress and the Administration "getting the message" of the recent elections, i.e., "Stop playing politics and do something."

What they did last week was cobble up a long-overdue fix that would provide up to twenty additional weeks of benefits for about 3 million workers who have been jobless for more than six months. That's a little more than one-third of those officially tallied as jobless and does nothing about the millions more who have given up looking for work.

Another example of Capitol gamesmanship are the pullulating proposals for tax reductions to "jump-start" consumer spending. But such measures take a year to have an effect—if any—and don't get to the root of the structural economic problems or consumer fears.

A purely Democratic ploy is the call for President Bush to stay home. Of course he should offer a domestic policy, but this kind of America Firstism discards the ideals of true internationalism and, in a global economy, is self-defeating jingoism.

What we're getting is fast-food politics: National health care and a side of college tuition aid? Coming up! (Don't hold your breath.) It's the result of years of political gridlock and neglect of economic and social needs in Washington.

Unemployment relief, yes, but job creation and infrastructure spending too. Middle-class tax relief, *sí*, but restore progressivity to the tax system. And hold the Whoppers.

CUOMO AND GAYS
TOM GOGOLA

AN INTERVIEW WITH LIGACHEV
KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

CLAUDE SIMON
BILL MARX

FOLK-LIFE MUSEUMS
EDWARD CHAPPELL

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In L.A. Kauffman's [illegible] essay on collective versus individual politics, "Tofu Politics in Berkeley" [Sept. 16], the reference to Greenpeace's work is misleading and must be corrected. Kauffman quotes the following from the introduction to a 1985 Greenpeace publication, *Stepping Lightly on the Earth: Everyone's Guide to Toxics in the Home*: "Changing the toxics habits of industries comes at great public expense and effort. . . . By contrast, changing purchasing patterns at home can be quick and easy, save money, solve household toxics problems and support industries that don't add to the toxics crisis." This guide was developed in response to numerous inquiries from the public for safe substitutes for toxic household products. Although this is a tangential part of our toxics work, we do strive to provide our supporters with basic information that hits close to home. We believe that drastic change in individual life styles is a necessary part of the solution. That guide predated the post-Earth Day public relations effort by industry to promote green consumerism. Concerned that the guide could be misinterpreted—as Kauffman has—as an endorsement of the "buy the environment clean" propaganda, we updated it last year. Our current *Stepping Lightly* guide says, "Not all polluters are created equal. . . . However, as consumers, choices we make can and do affect the environment. . . . By refusing to buy toxic products . . . we can take the profit out of pollution."

Kauffman gives the impression that in the field of toxics, Greenpeace endorses green consumerism over collective political action. That is incorrect. Our national toxics campaign is grounded in grass-roots organizing in communities targeted by government and industry as potential dump sites for toxic waste—usually low-income or working-class areas and minority communities. We are working to build a common political agenda with organized labor, people of color and other activist networks. These people, in turn, are recognizing that many of the injustices they combat are environmental—exposure to toxic chemicals, contaminated communities, poisoned food. We hope to redefine "environmentalism" from its conservation ethic to a social-change ethic. Greenpeace's efforts are an integral part of this grass-roots movement for environmental justice.

Peter Bahouth, executive director
Greenpeace

UNIONS TO THE RIGHT OF ME . . .

Kensington, Calif.

L.A. Kauffman's article is an illustration of the tunnel vision of the left that destroyed the Berkeley Co-op. The union members insisted on their $10+ pay scale plus benefits and full seniority rights, as many of them commuted to their Proposition 13 tax-protected houses [illegible]valnut Creek and Concord. When I talked with community activists who were negotiating with management to save the El Cerrito branch of the co-op, the union offered no compromise and preferred to see it close rather than give up anything. There was no evidence of concern for community organizations as this branch of the co-op closed and was replaced by a Pak and Save, which is now closing in turn. When unions represent only the pocketbooks of union members, they can't expect the community to give a hoot about their picket line. I am troubled by the move to the right in America. Sadly, in my experience, many union members are part of that very move.

Richard Boeke

SPIT IN THE WIND

San Rafael, Calif.

L.A. Kauffman criticizes the politics of those who cross picket lines in pursuit of health food instead of adopting more socially oriented modes of changing the world. But when we progressives criticize "them" for not being with "us," we must examine what it is about us and our ways of organizing that has so little meaning to them that they gladly patronize establishments we find destructive. Kauffman points out what happens when the personal overwhelms the political, but we should understand our movement's tendency to do the opposite. Unless we effect a balance between those extremes, criticizing people who shop at bad stores amounts to spitting into the wind. The corporate money-maker in Berkeley is doing something we don't—answering people's needs in a basic way. We must learn how to market our product better or get out of the business. If we continue to offer models of organization based on tool-and-die unions, we'll attract only the diminishing population of tool-and-die workers. And if we continue to act like academic twits who engineer other people's lives from our safe havens in the suburbs, we'll be treated by those people as what we are to them: aliens. Contradictions? We've got plenty, and they must be questioned critically before we rush to judgment about those Berkeley shoppers.

Frank Scott

KAUFFMAN REPLIES

San Francisco

The undated Greenpeace toxics report I referred to in my article remains in distribution, even though it was published several years ago. I cited it not to malign Greenpeace's important organizing work but to illustrate how widespread the temptation has become to disparage or reject collective politics, even with the tactical goal of "hitting close to home." I am glad to hear that Greenpeace, too, is worried about this temptation.

Richard Boeke is only one of many Berkeleyans who blame the unions for the closing of the Berkeley Co-op. Three and a half years later, the reason for its failure is hotly disputed; as the East Bay *Express* wrote at the time, "Labor blames management, management blames labor, and both blame the board. Fingerpointing is a grand old Co-op tradition."

I'm not concerned with establishing blame for what happened in Berkeley in the past. My concern is with the unwillingness of many progressive Berkeley residents to take seriously the very real threat Whole Foods Market is posing for grocery workers throughout the area today. There's ample evidence that some unions can be self-serving, ineffectual and even venal. But in a conflict like the one at Whole Foods, which pits a sophisticated and unscrupulous corporation against workers who are being denied adequate wages and benefits, which side are you on?

L.A. Kauffman

PETER PRINCIPLE

Bozeman, Mont.

What *is* the point of Edward Sorel's cartoon, "September Song" [Sept. 30]? Is he lampooning the current limp condition of American political/historical consciousness? Or is he lamenting its emasculation at the numbing, impersonally massaging hands of television? Why not sing the bittersweet sorrows of such consciousness in autumn? The days are indeed passing when the length and longevity of just one member of one-half of the species can serve as an appropriate or even mildly humorous metaphor for anything as inclusive as human politics or history. Then again we can only assume from Sorel's words (not drawings) that those hard-ons, as totemic markers of events, were real. I count four and a half bare breasts and one pubic patch (all female) but not one penis (erect or limp). What Sorel's cartoon confirms once again is that—now as then—American (male) political/historical consciousness remains woefully shallow, and that even its purported (male) critics are still afraid to expose *head-on* the whole, naked truth.

Patricia Connelly

UPS AND DOWNS

Long Beach, Calif.

I note, with compassion, how Ed Sorel must have marked the historic milestones of the past—Eisenhower the President, the missile crisis in Cuba, L.B.J. stepping down, Nixon stepping down—then erectile failure for Communism stepping down. There is hope, Ed. If you want to be back in business for Bush stepping down, you can have a direct injection (into the penis) of a drug that will provide an erection for up to four hours. I admire your work, Ed.

George Burton Kimbrough, M.D.

NOTE

In Sarah Henry's "Redlining People With AIDS" [Nov. 11], Mike Atkinson and Laura Miller are pseudonyms.

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EDITORIALS.

Magic's Show

Magic Johnson is the most powerful symbol of AIDS that has ever been created, but he is an emblem as well of the failed response and desperate denial that have characterized the epidemic so far. Johnson's tragedy is not only that he will die of the disease but that he may well die needlessly. Ten years into the plague there has been no significant national prevention policy, which could have worked to change his behavior and that of millions of others before infection. Research into a preventive vaccine and other therapies has been haphazard, profit- and career-driven, and underfunded. Demands for a Manhattan Project approach to a cure and care, raised years ago, have gone unheeded. Insurance companies and corporate employers have been allowed to get away with murder—literally—in their treatment of AIDS patients. And no national leader has uttered more than a choked whisper to lift public consciousness about this monstrous malady.

Johnson, a sports hero of uncommon gentleness and grace, is well slotted to address the failures and penetrate the denial of the epidemic. But for all his prowess, he cannot easily work magic. The mystification of AIDS is overwhelming and, as a result, its political exploitation is perfect. The discovery that some non-drug abusers and heterosexuals have HIV disease does raise new anxieties in clean-and-straight society, but it also becomes the exception that proves the rule that "other

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people get AIDS." Unless Johnson works hard to demolish the categories of "the other," he will make no more progress against the disease than those with a less heroic stance.

AIDS is unlike any medical crisis that has come to the country. Because of its origin as a "gay disease" (it was once called GRID—Gay Related Immune Deficiency), it is inextricably part of the dynamic of homosexual liberation and homophobia that is a political feature of the AIDS decade. Frothing homophobes like Senator Jesse Helms and Representative William Dannemeyer rack up points by bashing and blaming gays, but moderates and liberals contribute to the holocaust by holding their tongues, changing the subject or lowering AIDS priorities.

President Bush invited gay leaders to the White House (outside in the Rose Garden rather than in the Oval Office, to be sure), but he has completely abdicated leadership in the face of a curse upon his people infinitely more terrible than that posed by Saddam Hussein. Governors Pete Wilson of California and Mario Cuomo of New York have just gone out of their way to *reverse* antidiscrimination protection for lesbians and gays (see Tom Gogola, p. 693), thus stoking the fires of homophobia that prevent effective AIDS policies. The Democrat-controlled Congress, which passed a helpful but hardly extravagant AIDS-care bill last year (in honor of the hemophiliac P.W.A. Ryan White), appropriated less than a third of the authorized funds this year, leaving thousands of sick and dying patients without hope.

Magic Johnson can give his safe-sex rap in every high school gym in the country (if Dan Quayle, who can't rid himself of his fantasy of sexual abstinence, will let him), and he can sit on the National AIDS Commission as the P.W.A. du jour, but unless he joins in a full-court press against the politics of aversion and the culture of denial, he will save few lives. AIDS activists have known for a long time that the "second epidemic"—AIDS-phobia—is a social infection that greatly magnifies the physical disease. And there is a third illness as well—sex-negativism—which prescribes repression and puritanism as an antidote to the perceived evils of liberation. Those conditions must be engaged by direct assault on the system in which they grow. They are spread by silence and innuendo and fear, by politicians, drug companies, insurance companies, editorial writers, advertisers, Hollywood, the news media: all the places that Johnson *can* work his magic, if he tries.

Capitalist Road

The capitalist market was supposed to bring to Eastern Europe, if not social justice and equality, freedom and parliamentary democracy. Two years after the fall of the Berlin wall the question is, Will Eastern Europe get capitalism *and* the iron fist?

Poland is a good illustration. Transition to capitalism should have been easiest there, since it was being carried out by the anti-Communist leaders of Solidarity. But in the country's first free parliamentary election, on October 27, 57 percent of the electorate simply stayed home. Those who bothered dispersed their votes. The Democratic Union of former Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki came in first with only 12 percent of the vote. It was closely followed by the Alliance of the Democratic Left, which did slightly better than expected with more than 11 percent. The church put its full weight behind the Catholic Electoral Action, which came in fourth, while a divided Solidarity watched its myth come to an end.

The question now is, How can a government coalition be formed with the parties so divided? Behind that question lies an even more awkward one: How do you carry on with a policy of austerity sponsored by the International Monetary Fund but rejected by the people? It took Marshal Pilsudski eight years after World War I to put an end to the experiment in parliamentary democracy. Most people in Warsaw think it will take Lech Walesa much less time.

Boris Yeltsin has no movement like Solidarity at his disposal. Hence, when on October 28 he announced an economic shock therapy *à la polonaise*, he asked for special powers valid for a year. During that period, the President will also be head of the government. He will be able to act by decree, to suspend legislation that hinders the reform and to "change the structure of the supreme bodies of executive power." There is, however, a gap between powers on paper and their application. Having frightened the Russian people by announcing the immediate removal of most price controls, thus precipitating panic buying throughout the country, Yeltsin gives the impression that he is now having second thoughts on the scope and speed of reform.

In his campaign against Gorbachev, Yeltsin was driven to undermine the Soviet Union. Now, he is taking his own medicine. His efforts to achieve a common financial policy are vexed by the resistance of the Ukraine. The most striking example is his conflict with the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic. Under the leadership of Maj. Gen. Dzhokhar Dudayev, this predominantly Muslim republic decided to proclaim its independence. Yeltsin vetoed that in the name of Russian unity. Dudayev replied by holding an election in which he won the backing of 85 percent of the population. Yeltsin then declared a state of emergency in the area, only to discover that he had neither the troops nor the general support to impose it. This episode confirmed the feeling that the impetuous Russian leader tends to act first and to find out later whether he has the means to carry out his policy.

Beyond this personal revelation there is a more general lesson. It took the Poles twenty months of the new economic policy to realize that capitalism brings no miracles or, rather, that it brings plenty for a few and declining living standards for many. The Russians may show less patience. Everywhere, as the movement of protest grows, so will the attempts of the rulers to cope with what the Mayor of Moscow, Gavril Popov, called the "dangers of democracy." As this happens, it will be interesting to see the reaction of the Western mainstream press. For years it had been sensitive to breaches of democracy in Eastern Europe, particularly fond of labor unions and strikes that happened beyond the Elbe. What will it say now, should the workers strike against the born-again capitalists? If it keeps silent, it will confirm our sneaking suspicion that when it was allegedly calling for freedom, it was in fact preaching for profits.

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Ecce Cuomo

When Mario Cuomo took office as New York's Governor in 1983, he issued a landmark executive order outlawing discrimination based on sexual orientation in hiring state workers and in providing services. But when his own executive branch agency recently made a ruling based on the directive, the Governor—with visions of the White House dancing in his head—undercut his own orders and bought into the politics of patriotism.

Citing Cuomo's executive order, on September 20 the State Division of Human Rights ruled that the State University of New York at Buffalo could not provide space for recruiters from the Judge Advocate General Corps of the Army. This was a major victory for the gay rights movement, which has targeted the Defense Department's openly discriminatory policies against lesbians and gays.

But the gays' euphoria was short-lived. Blasted by state Republican leaders bent on undermining the Governor's possible presidential candidacy, Cuomo and his staff rushed to defuse the bombshell. By day's end, the Governor had declared the ruling "unenforceable" because a state education law that gives the military the same right to recruit on campus as the private sector superseded the executive order. Cuomo's hastily conjured legal cop-out gave him a face-saving way to deflect the G.O.P. attack. Never mind that when it was politically expedient, as in the case of the Shoreham nuclear power plant on Long Island, Cuomo was willing to defy a federal ruling that supposedly pre-empted state action.

Cuomo's move showed how adept he is at speaking out of both sides of his mouth. He opposed discrimination in the armed services, he said, but was equally opposed to banning recruiters from state campuses. And his pre-emptive strike on a ruling by his own agency prejudiced the appeal initiated by SUNY Chancellor D. Bruce Johnstone. The appeal will go to the Commissioner on Human Rights, Margarita Rosa, a Cuomo appointee. In the unlikely event that Rosa does not side with the Governor and SUNY, Cuomo will issue yet another executive order, allowing the recruiters to stay on campus, according to *The Buffalo News*.

The division's ruling came at a time when the Pentagon's discrimination against gays is on increasingly shaky ground. A dozen colleges have told the D.O.D. that they won't renew R.O.T.C. contracts if the gay*rein* policy isn't reversed, says the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. The same day that liberal Democrat Cuomo rushed to allow Army recruiters at SUNY Buffalo, Republican Governor Jim Edgar of Illinois did the right thing, vetoing a bill that would have barred attempts to throw R.O.T.C. off that state's campuses.

Meanwhile, legal challenges to antigay bias in the military are moving through the courts. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit recently sent a case back to trial, denying the Pentagon's claim that "social disapproval" of homosexuality is sufficient grounds to exclude lesbians and gays from the military. That case was initiated by a lesbian reservist who was discharged after coming out in the *Los Angeles Times*. Furthermore, a ruling is expected soon on the Joe Steffan case. Steffan was forced from the U.S. Naval Academy six weeks before graduation because he said he was gay. He's suing.

Typically, Cuomo exploited that egregious example of homophobia by appointing Steffan's lawyer, Sandra Lowe, of Lambda Legal Defense, as his liaison to the lesbian and gay community. Then he gave another middle-level job to the former director of the mainstream Fund for Human Dignity, a gay fundraising operation that dared not speak its name. It's a familiar ploy: Win points with a battered minority by dropping a well-behaved token or two into a government office.

Cuomo could have stood his ground in the SUNY Buffalo case and overcome G.O.P. attacks by blasting the homophobia lurking behind the patriotic posturing. In doing so, he would have affirmed himself as the nation's pre-eminent champion of equal rights. At the very least, the Governor could have idled his motor mouth and let the appeals process work without his meddling.

A recent Cuomo campaign brochure, "Visions," suggests where his priorities lie. In a photo of a 1990 election-night victory celebration, there's a smudge in the lower right-hand corner—the clumsy airbrushing of a sign smuggled in by an ACT UP party crasher that says, "Cuomo Kills." The centerfold spread shows the Governor shaking hands with the troops and bragging about saving New York's military bases from D.O.D.'s budget ax. Doesn't the Governor look presidential, standing there with Dick Cheney, Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf? That's a vision that won't play in queer nation.

TOM GOGOLA

Tom Gogola writes about politics and culture for Metroland, *an Albany, New York, weekly.*

★

THE RESULTS FROM PENNSYLVANIA

Dick Thornburgh, Bush's emulator
(An Ivy League accommodator),
Went home to take the job they'd proffered,
And ran straight into Harris Wofford.
Dick thought it was a cinch. Instead,
This Wofford handed him his head.
The lesson? Some say Dick got cocky,
Thus Wofford could be seen as Rocky.
(The boxer, not the veep and gov
Who now looks down from heav'n above.)
And some say Bush has clay for feet.
Whatever's true, Dick's on the street.

Calvin Trillin

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MINORITY REPORT.

Take the two propositions contained within the words "October Surprise." The two propositions are:

1. There was objective *and* subjective collusion between the Reagan campaign and the Ayatollah's men in 1980—objective because the two recognized a common interest in the defeat of Jimmy Carter and subjective because they deliberately but deniably coordinated this same common interest.

2. There are facts, inexplicable on their own, that can be explained no other way. Among those facts—many smoking guns in the form of arms deliveries, and several destabilizing interventions in the Carter re-election campaign.

There are two ways to approach this. First is to see if one hypothesis can account for all *known* facts. Second is to see if there is incontrovertible proof—confession or discovery—that would either negate the hypothesis or, in a flash of disclosure, vindicate it and make it unnecessary.

There is an alternative way, which is to ignore or ridicule the whole thing. For five years it was almost impossible to get any serious discussion of the case in the consensus media. Now, playing a rather vindictive form of catch-up, some of the organs of consensus have begun to protest too much. Surely, if only for reasons of professional pride, neither *Newsweek* nor *The New Republic* is ever going to allow that it missed the main story early on. (Only Gary Sick, of all those involved in the argument, has ever had the grace to admit that.) But in recent and mutually confirming cover stories, these two color magazines have both decided to say, at top volume, that there is no case at all for them to expend space upon.

Their chosen method is to make a surreptitious substitution of the part for the whole; to put aside the argument about whether there was a deal and to concentrate only on whether there was a meeting. Since not even clear evidence of a meeting (between, say, William Casey and the mullahs) would by itself convince anybody that there had been a deal, the exercise is in the wrong order as well as the wrong proportion. Still, rumors of 1980 meetings have been in the air for some time now, many of them floated by the oddest people and many of them reviewed in this space.

Both cover stories aim principally to discredit witnesses and unearth discrepancies, fair tactics in honest polemical or legal exchange. *Newsweek* makes a good point in observing:

> Journalists are vulnerable to the lure of a super-source—another Deep Throat, someone who knows all and pieces everything together in a nice, neat package. In the October Surprise case, there are four would-be Deep Throats: Barbara Honegger, Richard Brenneke, Jamshid Hashemi and Ari Ben-Menashe. At some point each has claimed first-person knowledge of the conspiracy. The stories they told overlapped in broad outline—and in some cases, they compared stories, swapped details and helped each other become more convincing.

I call this a good point because I made it myself, in almost those precise words, during two long chats with *Newsweek* on October 10 and 11. I added two riders that both *Newsweek* and *The New Republic* omit, and that bear restatement:

1. The hypothesis of collusion does not *depend* on these or any other "eyewitnesses," any more than, say, the evidence of collusion at Suez in 1956 depends on the much-later-discovered transcript of conspiratorial meetings held at Sèvres between the British, French and Israelis. As with 1956, the hypothesis of collusion in 1980 rests upon observable public and political correspondences. It was evolved, and ignored, long before the "super-sources" broke cover. And we know much of what Watergate was, even if we still don't know the motive or identity of Deep Throat.

2. With the exception of Honegger, who really does seem to live in a consoling world of her own, all the witnesses cited above have been known to tell the truth on important and obscure points, as well as to tell fantastic lies.

One might think that this second point would be part of journalism's A-B-C. There is no need for a schooling in the Cretan paradox: Is a liar telling the truth when he claims to be lying? You ask of a source not "Is he an honest, incorruptible man?" but "Does his information check out?" This would be valid even if *The New Republic* and *Newsweek* did not implicitly accept the word of proven liars and obfuscators like Edwin Meese, Richard Allen, George Bush and Robert MacFarlane. Powerful people are never called liars or frauds or fantasists in such magazines. Who could fail to be touched when, on its first page, *Newsweek* announced that "after a long investigation *including interviews with government officials and other knowledgeable sources*," we could all relax and put the thought of high-level collusion out of our minds? And who wouldn't be impressed to read in *The New Republic* that "according to sworn affidavits, Israeli officials in the office of the prime minister, *including Shamir himself*, never heard of Ben-Menashe." (Italics mine; deference theirs.)

Briefly: I regard Richard Brenneke, Ari Ben-Menashe and Jamshid Hashemi as habitually deceitful riffraff. I base this judgment on their own claim to membership in the "secret world" of arms dealing, double dealing, narcotics trafficking and "national security." But to be witnesses to the underworld, they'd have to come from it, wouldn't they? And my interest in them is this: Brenneke once gave a document to a friend of mine proving that he had indeed told an official of the Defense Intelligence Agency, on January 3, 1986, that "Admiral Poindexter had given permission to sell 10,000 missiles to Iran." That happens to be the date of the crucial "finding," concerted with Israeli spook Amiram Nir, that sent TOW missiles to Teheran. How could Brenneke have known perhaps the greatest single secret of the secret state? Again, Ari Ben-Menashe gave evidence to Seymour Hersh (no pushover when it comes to fact checking) about the involvement of Robert Maxwell's organization in Israeli nuclear espionage. As I write, this disclosure is convulsing Fleet Street by the simple, old-fashioned device of turning out to be true. And Jamshid Hashemi, asked by ABC's *Nightline* to substantiate his own presence in Madrid in July 1980, was able to do so and to pinpoint the one time—which he could not have otherwise known—that William Casey's overseas movements were suddenly hard to trace.

Why, if the October 1980 quid pro quo is such a dud cur-

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CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

rency, have so many experienced opportunists shown such a keen interest in counterfeiting it?

Whatever the motive for their decision to run arcane cover stories, descending into misleading detail about a hypothesis they had never before examined, the two mainstream magazines effected a pre-emptive strike on a book—*October Surprise*, by Gary Sick—that their respective writers knew was to be published the following week but had not waited to read. Captain Sick was instantly faced with a lot of hostile, ill-informed, time-wasting questions that he had already answered. *The New Republic*'s interests were made obvious enough: to shield Israel from the outrageous charge of improper conduct on arms-for-hostages and to forward Martin Peretz's puerile vendetta against the Public Broadcasting Service. *Newsweek*, ostensibly less vulgar and politicized, nevertheless opened the bidding by saying that the collusion hypothesis had originated with Lyndon LaRouche's cranksheet *Executive Intelligence Review*. Those of us scanning this Nazi rag for the first time were able to notice (a) that *E.I.R.* deliberately did *not* accuse the Reagan-Bush campaign of manipulating the 1980 crisis, and (b) that the emphasis at least makes a change. The Reaganites like Jesse Helms and Ed Meese, who have emerged as the chief antagonists of the collusion hypothesis, have not been at all ashamed to borrow material from LaRouche about, say, Michael Dukakis's fictitious shrink appointments. But they keep moaning that demands for an October Surprise inquiry are evidence of panicky Democratic partisanship. Just like the notion that the theory comes from a fascist cult, this line is a laugh in itself.

If the October Surprise is such a dud currency, why are so many experienced opportunists interested in counterfeiting it?

Captain Sick's book is, I think, potentially a real event in the life of the Republic. No advance defamation can obscure his relentless, many-sided focus on the case for collusion. He shows:

1. That many mutiny-minded C.I.A. men given early retirement by Carter and Adm. Stansfield Turner were specialists at manipulating elections in Europe and the Third World.

2. That there was a well-organized theft of presidential papers from Carter's most secret meetings, that those papers concerned Iran and the hostages, and that they were procured and exploited by the Reagan-Bush campaign.

3. That the few speeches made by Ronald Reagan on the hostage issue and the conditions for its settlement were timed to coincide with new and ever more impossible demands from Teheran, and to increase Carter's difficulty.

4. That details of attempts to rescue the hostages—after the misery of Desert One—were "leaked" to Iran even before senior Administration officials knew of them.

5. That the pattern of 1980 Israeli shipments to Iran, in spite of Carter's embargo, was understood by Iran to be a down payment on future shipments, which obviously wouldn't be coming from any Carter Administration.

6. That weapons flowed to Iran almost as soon as Reagan's inauguration was over, and that these shipments—coming when there were no hostages in Teheran and not yet any in Beirut—were "cleared" at no lower than the level of Gen. Alexander Haig. (Sick adds, with typical pedantry, that even if such transfers were "cleared," they would have been illegal.)

7. That at least one person—a former intelligence agent named Oswald LeWinter—has admitted receiving money for posing as a "source" for the story and spreading discrediting information intended to "confirm" it. He did this under the name of "Mr. Razin." (I remember this guy. He was often promoted by Barbara Honegger, and I'm glad to say I never gave him the time of day. Again, though, why go to such trouble to devalue a counterfeit currency?)

8. That the diagram of the October 1980 collusion is a key to the later and more fully exposed diagram of the Iran/*contra* collusion, which unambiguously involved arms being handed by Reaganites to hostage-takers.

What is the reply of our great intellectual weekly and our staunch newsweekly to all of the above? Why, nothing. They never set out even to ask the questions. They prefer to dispute the timing and nature of Israeli shipments (admittedly a clarifying exercise) and to smear witnesses to irrelevant "meetings." On the one crucial meeting, in Madrid, Sick has more reason to believe that Casey was there than his detractors have to believe he was not. But he is fair to his critics, and they won't return the compliment.

In a final burst of self-pity, the consensus scribblers complain that they have to investigate the protean allegation of "conspiracy" and face the thankless task of proving a negative. Insofar as this is valid, it applies to their own method as well. By declaring the collusion hypothesis a concoction—"a lucrative cottage industry," *The New Republic* grotesquely puts it—they are in fact alleging another conspiracy. Alas for them, they propose a conspiracy between people who have never met, or hadn't met except through the hypothesis itself, or have never spoken at all. This is the sort of conspiracy theory in which only paranoids engage. Defenders of the hypothesis simply point to hard and repeated evidence of collusion among people well accustomed to working together in secret, well trained in the habits of cover-up and covert action, and well disciplined by a common interest. Such people don't exactly need to conspire, so no negative needs to be proved. I suppose it could be asserted that the Reagan campaign, managed by men like Casey and Meese and Allen, aware of its opportunity and of Carter's vulnerability, and tempted by the offers from pro-Iranian middlemen, nonetheless decided to do nothing to protract the hostage crisis. But if you were willing to believe that after Debategate and Irangate, you would have to confess to a readiness to believe anything.

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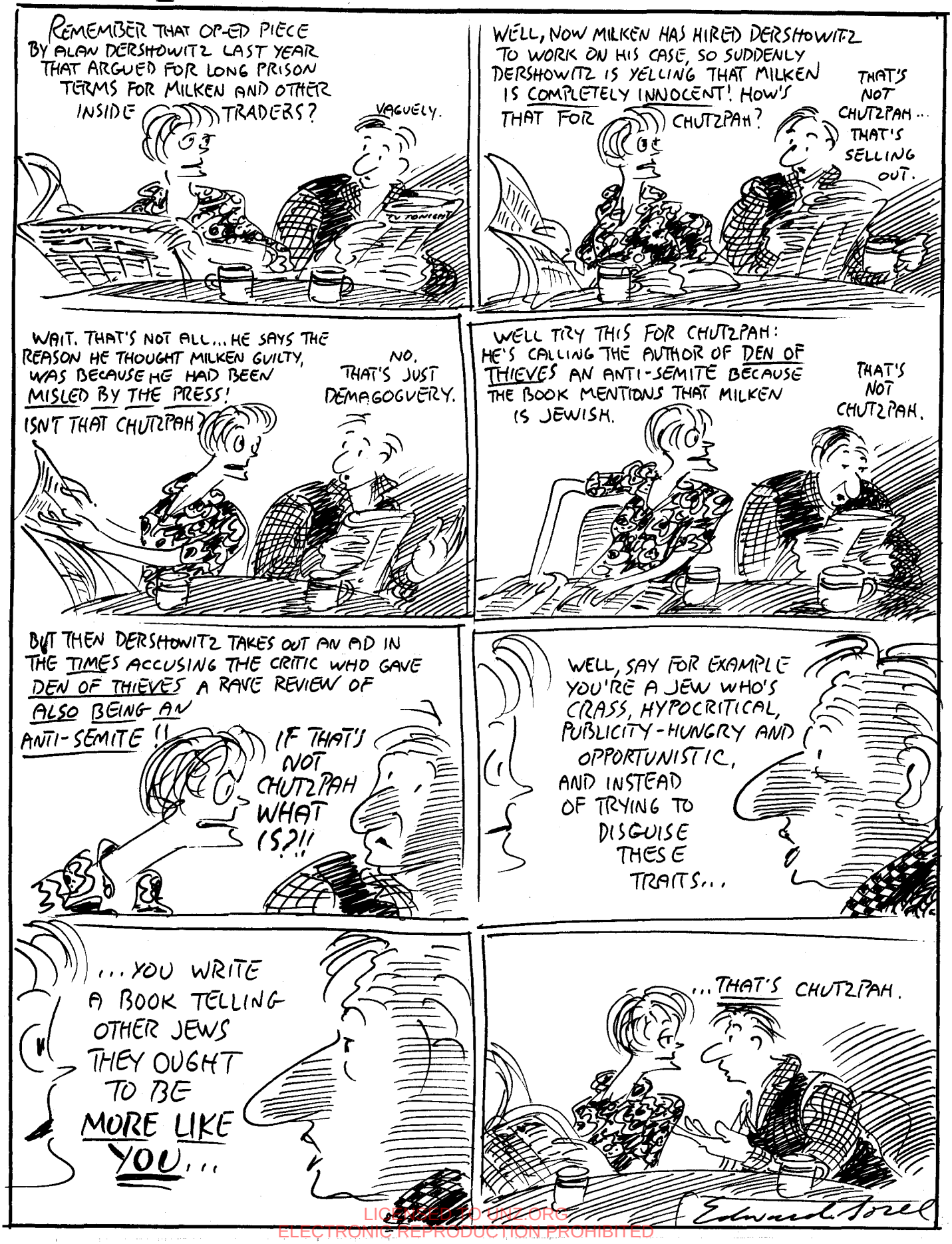
Chutzpah

EDWARD SOREL


REMEMBER THAT OP-ED PIECE BY ALAN DERSHOWITZ LAST YEAR THAT ARGUED FOR LONG PRISON TERMS FOR MILKEN AND OTHER INSIDE TRADERS?
VAGUELY.
TV TONIGHT
WELL, NOW MILKEN HAS HIRED DERSHOWITZ TO WORK ON HIS CASE, SO SUDDENLY DERSHOWITZ IS YELLING THAT MILKEN IS COMPLETELY INNOCENT! HOW'S THAT FOR CHUTZPAH?
THAT'S NOT CHUTZPAH... THAT'S SELLING OUT.
WAIT. THAT'S NOT ALL... HE SAYS THE REASON HE THOUGHT MILKEN GUILTY, WAS BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN MISLED BY THE PRESS! ISN'T THAT CHUTZPAH?
NO. THAT'S JUST DEMAGOGUERY.
WELL TRY THIS FOR CHUTZPAH: HE'S CALLING THE AUTHOR OF DEN OF THIEVES AN ANTI-SEMITE BECAUSE THE BOOK MENTIONS THAT MILKEN IS JEWISH.
THAT'S NOT CHUTZPAH.
BUT THEN DERSHOWITZ TAKES OUT AN AD IN THE TIMES ACCUSING THE CRITIC WHO GAVE DEN OF THIEVES A RAVE REVIEW OF ALSO BEING AN ANTI-SEMITE!!
IF THAT'S NOT CHUTZPAH WHAT IS?!!
WELL, SAY FOR EXAMPLE YOU'RE A JEW WHO'S CRASS, HYPOCRITICAL, PUBLICITY-HUNGRY AND OPPORTUNISTIC, AND INSTEAD OF TRYING TO DISGUISE THESE TRAITS...
...YOU WRITE A BOOK TELLING OTHER JEWS THEY OUGHT TO BE MORE LIKE YOU...
...THAT'S CHUTZPAH.
Edward Sorel

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ARTICLES.

U.S. DRUG POLICY ON TRIAL

Noriega In Miami

MICHAEL MASSING

It was billed as the drug trial of the century, but two months after it began, *United States of America v. Manuel Antonio Noriega et al.* seems a big dud. Four days a week in the federal courthouse in downtown Miami, government prosecutors interrogate an endless procession of obscure witnesses about inconsequential events that occurred eight or nine years ago. Jurors snooze. Journalists groan. Manuel Noriega, the macho general who gleefully defied two American Presidents, sits at the defense table scribbling notes, a small, inconspicuous presence in the spacious wood-paneled chamber. Initially splashed across the front pages of the nation's newspapers, the trial now appears inside Section B—when, that is, it shows up at all. "Manuel Lays an Egg," ran the headline above a recent story in *The Miami Herald*. "It's 24 hours a week of legal tedium played to an audience of three men and nine women who must be trapped between boredom and loss of consciousness," the paper observed.

Yet beneath the surface, the trial is a fascinating affair, its torpor regularly punctured by riveting revelations and arresting asides. In this ornately elegant courtroom, lighted by antique chandeliers and ringed by the portraits of robed judges, a tense political drama is being played out. On trial is not only Noriega but also the American legal system, the invasion of Panama and, most telling of all, U.S. drug policy as it has evolved over the past ten years. The Noriega trial, in fact, provides an excellent look at the ideology of the Bush Administration's war on drugs—and shows why it is bankrupt.

I.

During the week I attended the trial, in October, each day brought forth some intriguing bit of news. One morning, for instance, Lorenzo Purcell, a former commander of the Panamanian Air Force (now working at a Fort Lauderdale pizzeria), revealed that the 1984 presidential campaign of Nicolás Ardito Barletta—a Noriega front man who won through fraud—was financed in part by money from the Medellín drug cartel. Eduardo Pardo, a former cartel pilot, described how drug lord Pablo Escobar had a secret compartment installed on his Learjet so that the plane could transport drug money from southern Florida to Panama.

Most striking of all was the testimony of Gabriel Taboada, a Colombian car dealer serving a twenty-one-year sentence for cocaine smuggling. Wearing khaki prison garb, the smooth-talking, tousle-haired Taboada spent a morning describing in great detail an elaborate scam he had devised for importing luxury cars into Colombia despite a legal ban on them. Diplomats (who were exempt from the ban) were paid up to $50,000 each to allow the cars to be brought in under their names and outfitted with diplomatic plates. In all, said Taboada, he imported forty-seven cars, using envoys from Spain, Mexico, Honduras, the Soviet Union, Iran and Iraq.

Among his customers was Fabio Ochoa, a *capo* of the Medellín mafia. After watching an episode of *Magnum P.I.* in which Tom Selleck drove a red Ferrari 308, Ochoa decided he wanted one just like it, Taboada testified. Ferraris were not exactly common cars in Colombia, however, and most ambassadors were reluctant to get involved. Special arrangements had to be made. Summoned to Ochoa's opulent estate outside the city of Medellín in mid-1983, Taboada said, he was led into a meeting attended by a number of top traffickers, including Pablo Escobar and Jorge Ochoa (Fabio's brother), plus a Panamanian dressed in white and introduced as "Manuel"—the defendant. Taboada suggested that the Ferrari be imported through the Panamanian Embassy. Noriega rejected the idea, saying that "would be the same as having a photograph taken of him with his arm around Fabio and having it sent to *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times*."

Shortly thereafter, Taboada continued, a briefcase was brought into the room and presented to Noriega. He opened it, revealing rows of neatly packed 100-dollar bills. "Five hundred," someone said, which Taboada took to mean $500,000. Noriega promised to find a way to bring the car in, and eventually it was imported through the Haitian Embassy in Bogotá.

It was a sensational story, placing Noriega in the traffickers' very lair. "The most damaging testimony against Noriega to date," *The Miami Herald* called it. Such triumphant moments, though, have been rare for the prosecution. From the start, its case has been marred by glaring contradictions, lapses and inconsistencies. Dates do not always jibe, and key details are often missing, raising questions about the government's contention that Noriega turned Panama into a haven for the Medellín cartel.

The government's case focuses on the years from 1982 to 1984. The thirty-page, eleven-count indictment charges Noriega with receiving at least $4 million from the cartel in return for allowing its members to fly cocaine through Panama en route to the United States; to use Panama to obtain chemicals needed in the manufacture of cocaine; to build a cocaine-producing laboratory in Panama; and to launder millions of dollars in Panamanian banks. In addition to Noriega, the indictment names fifteen other Panamanians and Colombians, including Pablo Escobar.

To make its case, the government has called on an unsavory array of bagmen, drug pilots and con artists. Their performances often border on the burlesque. Luis del Cid, a former officer in the Panamanian Defense Forces (P.D.F.) and a self-described "errand boy" for Noriega, claimed to have given him envelopes and suitcases full of cartel money. Questioned

Michael Massing is writing a book on the politics of the war on drugs.

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by the defense, however, del Cid admitted that he never actually looked inside the packages. How, then, did he know they contained cash? "It couldn't be anything else," he lamely responded.

Equally spotty was the testimony of Floyd Carlton Caceres, once a trusted cartel pilot. After being arrested in 1986, Carlton, a Panamanian, told U.S. drug agents that the Colombians had paid Noriega $600,000 for permission to fly three planeloads of cocaine through Panama. These four flights are at the core of the indictment against Noriega, and Carlton was billed as the government's star witness.

The important question is what effect Noriega's removal has had on America's drug problem.

In court, though, his story was full of holes. When he first told Noriega that the cartel had approached him about using Panama as a transit point, Carlton said, the general exploded in anger. Noriega was about to become Commander in Chief of the P.D.F. and did not want to risk tainting his image. Noriega later changed his mind, Carlton said, but during cross-examination he conceded that Noriega had never actually done anything to protect the drug flights; in fact, he had not even known about them in advance. What's more, in December 1983, Noriega ordered a halt to the flights. "Under no circumstances," Carlton said, did he "want to be linked to the people in the Mafia."

The defense—led by Frank Rubino, a raspy-voiced former Secret Service agent—has yet to call any witnesses. In its cross-examinations, though, its main line of defense has become clear: Noriega had no involvement whatsoever with drug trafficking. Rather, Carlton and other unscrupulous associates traded on his name to extract large sums from the cartel. Far from facilitating drug trafficking, the defense maintains, Noriega was a model drug fighter, assisting the Drug Enforcement Administration (D.E.A.) at every turn. When it does get around to calling witnesses, the defense is expected to summon a number of U.S. officials to serve as character witnesses for Noriega.

For years, of course, Noriega was a favorite in Washington. He lunched with William Casey, conferred with Oliver North, met with George Bush. At the Pentagon, Noriega was received as a great potentate, and at Langley as a prized asset. Earlier this year, the C.I.A. and the U.S. Army admitted paying Noriega $320,000 for his services over a thirty-one-year period. (The actual sum may have been much higher.) It was only after Jesse Helms began agitating against Noriega in Congress, and Seymour Hersh exposed him in *The New York Times*, that the White House finally broke with its man in Panama. When Noriega refused to step down willingly, President Bush sent the largest posse in history to get him. Talk about illegal search and seizure!

The government's excesses have multiplied during the trial itself. Many of its witnesses are convicted felons, to whom the government has offered reduced sentences and extravagant fees in return for testimony. Even Carlos Lehder, the murderous, Hitler-loving drug lord who helped flood Florida with cocaine in the early 1980s, has been enlisted. In exchange for his help, Lehder, who was sentenced in 1988 to life imprisonment plus 130 years, has reportedly been moved from a basement cell at the federal prison in Marion, Illinois, to a third-floor room with a view and cable TV. Robert Merkel, the former U.S. Attorney who prosecuted Lehder, told Michael Isikoff of *The Washington Post*, "I don't think the government should be in the business of dealing with Carlos Lehder, period. This guy is a liar from beginning to end."

On a number of other fronts as well, the government's conduct has raised eyebrows. It has frozen Noriega's assets, estimated at $20 million, making it hard for him to mount a proper defense. (Eventually, the United States allowed an Austrian bank to release $1.6 million.) The government has taped Noriega's telephone calls to his lawyers and obtained a secret list of defense witnesses. Most curious of all, Noriega's original chief counsel, Raymond Takiff, surfaced in another case as a government informer. Add in the lapses of its witnesses, and the prosecution's case would seem to be in big trouble.

Except for one thing: Noriega is almost certainly guilty. During his time in office, Panama became a cesspool of corruption, and drugs were no small part of it. Myriad shipments of cocaine were transported across Panama's borders, and billions of drug dollars were deposited in its banks. "I believe without a shadow of a doubt that Noriega is guilty," says Bruce Bagley, a professor at the University of Miami who is a leading expert on the Colombian drug trade. "I've heard from any number of sources that he was covered with cocaine." John Dinges writes in a new edition of his book *Our Man in Panama* that "after a close examination of the investigations that led to the indictments against Noriega, I found no basis to question their general conclusions."

Several reporters covering the trial told me of their deep skepticism about Gabriel Taboada's testimony. Noriega was too circumspect, and had too much to lose, to make such a risky trip to Medellín, they argued. Certainly he would never accept a bribe in the presence of a complete stranger. Others, though, had little trouble crediting Taboada's account. Joel Rosenthal, a criminal lawyer in Miami who travels frequently to Colombia (he once represented Pablo Escobar), said that such meetings are typical of the way the cartel does business. "They like to negotiate face to face," he told me, adding, "I have no question whatsoever that Noriega was tight with the cartel. They partied together. He gave them passports, licenses and jeeps. In return, he got pictures of dead presidents," i.e., dollars.

The really important question raised by the Noriega case is not so much whether the man dealt in drugs but what effect his removal has had on America's drug problem. Operation Just Cause was sold to the American people as a crippling blow in the campaign against the international narcotics trade. Yet, nearly two years later, cocaine continues to flow unabated into the United States. According to a recent report by the General Accounting Office, money laundering has

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"flourished" since the invasion and drug trafficking "may have doubled." To understand why this is so—and why the Noriega case is at bottom a fiasco—it's necessary to examine how the indictment against him and the cartel came about.

II.

Given all the attention the Medellín cartel has received in recent years, it's hard to recall that, as late as 1984, few Americans knew of its existence. Even the D.E.A. was largely in the dark. Pablo Escobar and the Ochoa brothers were on the agency's most-wanted list, but officials had little notion of how they operated. Things began to change in March 1984, when Colombian police, working with the D.E.A., discovered a huge cocaine-producing facility in the Colombian jungle. At the site they found fourteen labs, seven airplanes, 11,800 drums of chemicals and 13.8 metric tons of cocaine—an unimaginable quantity at the time. Called Tranquilandia by the traffickers, the complex showed that the Colombian drug trade had achieved extraordinary levels of integration.

Seven weeks later, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, Colombia's Justice Minister and top law-enforcement official, was gunned down in Bogotá while riding in his official limousine. It was a clear act of retaliation for the raid on Tranquilandia, and an ominous sign of the traffickers' growing ruthlessness. A uniquely sinister criminal enterprise had taken shape in Medellín, and American drug agents began studying it more intently.

They were assisted in that task by two informants. Barry Seal, a fast-talking, self-assured, 300-pound pilot and Special Forces veteran, had flown numerous smuggling missions on behalf of Escobar and other Medellín-based traffickers. Arrested in southern Florida in 1983, Seal gave the D.E.A. its first real glimpse inside the Medellín connection. (Seal was later gunned down by cartel hit men.) Even more knowledgeable was Max Mermelstein, a Brooklyn-born trafficker who, until his arrest in June 1985, was a member of the cartel's inner circle. "Max's position with the Medellín cartel was akin to Joe Valachi's with the Mafia," Guy Gugliotta and Jeff Leen write in *Kings of Cocaine*. "Like Valachi, whose dramatic testimony before the U.S. Senate in 1963 served as the first public unveiling of the Cosa Nostra, Mermelstein took the feds deeper than ever before into an uncharted area of organized crime." Mermelstein gave the D.E.A. its first truly comprehensive look at what he called the Medellín combine.

He also described the workings of another trafficking group based in the town of Cali. Comparable in size to the Medellín organization, the Cali cartel nonetheless sparked much less interest among federal drug agents. For one thing, the Cali traffickers were far less violent than their Medellín counterparts. Shrewd businessmen who disliked calling attention to themselves, the Caleños eschewed acts such as the Lara Bonilla assassination; as a result, they seemed less threatening.

Furthermore, the Cali group was not very active in southern Florida. New York, Los Angeles and Houston were all Cali markets; Miami was exclusively Medellín turf. And it was Miami—then America's main cocaine gateway—that was getting most of the nation's attention. It was here, for instance, that the White House set up a special task force to combat drug smuggling into the United States. It was here, too, that *Miami Vice*'s Don Johnson and Philip Michael Thomas tooled about in their European-cut suits battling sleazy drug dealers. *The Miami Herald*, which quickly outpaced other newspapers in probing the international drug trade, ran a series of exposés on the Colombian traffickers that focused primarily on Pablo Escobar & Company. Through such hype, the Medellín cartel became synonymous in this country with the Colombian cocaine trade.

It was in this climate that the U.S. Attorney's office in Miami went into action. Until the early 1980s, the office was a prosecutorial backwater, concentrating mostly on street-level dealers. In 1982, however, Stanley Marcus was named the U.S. Attorney for southern Florida. Intent on invigorating the office, he hired a number of top-flight lawyers and urged them to go after top-level traffickers. To head his narcotics section, Marcus named Richard Gregorie, a savvy, ambitious prosecutor with experience in fighting organized crime. Appalled by the drug-related violence engulfing Miami, Gregorie and his assistants decided to target the upper rungs of the Colom-

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bian trade. Working from information supplied by Seal and Mermelstein, they fashioned a single giant case from a number of smuggling incidents that occurred between 1978 and 1985. The indictment named Pablo Escobar, Carlos Lehder and the Ochoa brothers—all members of the Medellín cartel. It was handed down on November 18, 1986.

During their investigation, the Miami prosecutors kept coming across references to Manuel Noriega. Throughout the boom years of the early 1980s, the Medellín cartel was constantly seeking new routes through the Caribbean Basin, and Panama—with its strategic location, extensive unregulated banking system and willing government—became a key outlet. It was not until June 1987, however, when Floyd Carlton agreed to cooperate, that the U.S. Attorneys in Miami knew they had a case. "Carlton was critical in linking Noriega to the cartel," recalls Mark Schnapp, a Miami lawyer who worked on the indictment.

All the while, U.S. pressure on Noriega was building. With crack causing havoc in cities across the country, the drug issue quickly soared to the top of the nation's agenda. Eager to display their toughness, politicians found in Noriega an inviting target. In 1987 Senator John Kerry, chairman of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Operations, began mounting an investigation into drug trafficking in Pan-

When He Knew It

At the insistence of the Justice Department, a great deal of fascinating evidence has apparently been ruled inadmissible in the Noriega trial by Judge William Hoeveler. (I say "apparently" because, under the Classified Information Protection Act, the defense is not even permitted to discuss openly all the documentation it wishes to subpoena or introduce—even when this supposedly secret material is already on the public record.)

That is too bad. The defense held out the promise of revelations: a fuller account of Noriega's rise as a C.I.A. protégé, a better understanding of U.S. relations with Panama and possibly even a sharper perspective on the government's equivocal approach to the international narcotics trade.

The defense's submission to the judge under CIPA does, however, provide some insight into what we won't be seeing. One such bit of disallowed evidence is a still-classified study produced by the Justice Department itself in 1975, known as the DeFeo Report.

The report, compiled by a team of attorneys under the direction of Michael DeFeo, sets out the results of a wide-ranging investigation of misconduct in the Drug Enforcement Administration and the C.I.A., notably including a plot by top D.E.A. officials to assassinate Noriega. It has been kept "secret" for more than fifteen years, its contents suppressed repeatedly by Republican bureaucrats and legislators such as former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh and Senator Orrin Hatch, the slightly erratic Republican member of the Judiciary Committee from Utah, best known for his dramatic reading from *The Exorcist*. The legitimate national security reasons for keeping the DeFeo Report under wraps are hard to discern at this point, but the political reasons seem obvious.

When the report was completed, its submersion served to protect an already stained Richard Nixon, as well as the C.I.A. and the D.E.A. But lately the politician who stands to be most embarrassed by the contents of the DeFeo Report is George Bush. Release of the full report would prove, among other things, that Bush and the rest of the government knew about Noriega's alleged narcotics trafficking no later than 1976, when Bush was Director of Central Intelligence, and probably as early as 1971.

The D.E.A. was so certain it knew about the Panamanian officer's drug dealing that it planned to murder Noriega, then a colonel in charge of military intelligence. The scheme seems to have been part of a massive, covert antidrug operation run out of the Nixon White House by a group that included such familiar figures as G. Gordon Liddy, E. Howard Hunt, Egil Krogh, Bernard Barker and assorted friends from Miami's Cuban exile underworld. Aside from bugging the Watergate and conducting other domestic dirty tricks, their vocation was "drug enforcement."

The leaders of this dubious posse apparently concluded sometime in 1972 that Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos was responsible for the large shipments of heroin that were entering the United States via his country. Their simple solution was to get rid of Torrijos and/or his chief aide, Noriega. Hunt allegedly went so far as to engage a Bay of Pigs veteran for the Torrijos hit.

Just how far this tough talk went was examined by DeFeo's team. According to a June 18, 1975, memo that is part of their report, "It was alleged that a discussion concerning assassination involved the possibility of killing Mr. Noryago [*sic*], the principal assistant to the president of Panama, and that [Phillip] Smith [acting chief inspector of the D.E.A.] and William Durkin [D.E.A. assistant administrator for enforcement] actually proposed that he be killed." The Justice Department's criminal division, then headed by Thornburgh, reviewed all the material gathered by the DeFeo team and determined that there was "no evidence that any overt acts occurred which could be characterized as criminal violations of the law." Yet this tortured conclusion in no way denied that the plan was discussed.

Moreover, the DeFeo team gathered a vast array of evidence concerning the D.E.A. assassination plot and implicating Noriega, Torrijos and other Panamanian officials in narcotrafficking. An inventory of those materials was turned over to Thornburgh on September 10, 1975, and it listed an undated, five-page "Report re: Colonel Manuel NORIEGA concerning options w/respect to immobilization and/or neutralization of NORIEGA."

Why was no one indicted for conspiring to assassinate a for-

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ama and other countries in the region. Feeling the competition, the U.S. Attorneys in Miami stepped up the pace of their own probe. Eventually, Gregorie came up with nine witnesses in addition to Carlton (all but three of them convicted felons). By early 1988, the Noriega indictment was nearly complete.

There remained the matter of Washington's approval. Indicting Noriega was, of course, a highly sensitive matter. Never before had a foreign leader been so charged in this country, and moving ahead in this case would have profound repercussions. But the U.S. Attorneys in Miami were resolute. In 1986 their office had let lapse an investigation into gunrunning to the Nicaraguan *contras*. Leon Kellner, Stanley Marcus's successor as U.S. Attorney, was widely accused of caving in to White House pressure; he denied this, but the criticism made him doubly determined to see the case through. In late January 1988, he and Gregorie traveled to Washington to brief Justice Department officials on the case. They encountered little resistance. And so, on February 5, 1988, Manuel Noriega was indicted on drug trafficking and racketeering charges.

At the time, of course, it seemed highly unlikely that the case would ever go to court. The State Department was pressing Noriega to step down, and the indictment seemed little more than a bargaining chip. But then came the U.S. invasion and Noriega's capture, and suddenly the U.S. government faced the prospect of actually trying the man. The Miami prosecutors hoped that the search of Noriega's quarters in Panama would turn up evidence of his involvement in drug trafficking. Days after the invasion, in fact, Army investigators announced they had found a fifty-pound stash of cocaine in one of Noriega's offices. On closer examination, though, it turned out to be a flourlike substance used in cooking. What's more, the many thousands of documents seized in Panama contained no smoking gun. Gradually, it became clear that the government would have to rely on oral testimony. Squads of F.B.I. agents fanned out through Florida's prisons, looking for inmates with dirt on Noriega. By the end of the summer of 1991, the government had lined up more than sixty witnesses.

Finally, on September 16, in a courtroom packed with reporters, lawyers, government agents and spectators, Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Sullivan delivered the prosecution's opening statement. Manuel Noriega, he declared, "is the last military strongman from Panama. He looks small here in this cavernous courtroom, but he was a giant in Panama."

III.

Oddly, during the trial Noriega has often seemed absent. On most days his name comes up only two or three times, usually in some offstage role. Overall, the trial has left the clear impression that Noriega's part in the drug trade, though real, was quite modest. The events described in the indictment all took place before the summer of 1984, with the exception of a single drugs-for-arms deal said to have occurred in March 1986. According to Sullivan, Carlos Lehder will testify that Noriega was "just another crooked cop"—one of hundreds paid off by the cartel. In *Our Man in Panama*, Dinges estimates that Noriega earned at most $10 million to $15 million from drugs—"substantial sums, but leaving him a mid-level player in the billion-dollar league of the Latin American drug entrepreneurs." According to Dinges, once Noriega's primary drug involvement ended, in the early 1980s, he "became a trusted and overtly zealous DEA collaborator." That such a committed enforcer is no longer in power may help to explain why drug smuggling in Panama has boomed since the invasion.

Meanwhile, Pablo Escobar—the other top figure named in the indictment—sits in a prison outside Medellín. He turned himself in this past summer after a determined two-year offensive by the Colombian government. The organization he once

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eign official? And why was no further action taken against Noriega if he was indeed involved in selling narcotics for so long? Thornburgh came close to being asked these questions in the summer of 1988, when he was confirmed as Attorney General (to replace the disgraced Edwin Meese). His would-be interlocutor on this delicate subject was Orrin Hatch. On August 5, 1988, while demanding that Thornburgh surrender the DeFeo Report immediately, the Senator announced that its contents would prove "once and for all" that the Panamanian government had been involved in narcotics since the 1970s—a favorite charge in the right-wing litany against the Panama Canal treaty.

The eager Thornburgh, who had ordered the report withheld from Congress in 1976, agreed to hand it over this time, and Hatch's office later confirmed that it had been received. But there the matter ended.

Perhaps the publicity-hungry Senator suddenly realized that its contents would make a liar of Bush, his party's presidential nominee and, at the time, a target of considerable vilification for coddling the terrible Noriega. At the time, Bush was denying that he'd known anything about Noriega's connection with drugs until the Panamanian was indicted in February 1988. But even the fragments of the DeFeo Report that have leaked out over the years show that Bush must have known as early as 1976. The DeFeo Report, including the section on Panama, concerned numerous C.I.A.-related matters that would have crossed Bush's desk. Moreover, as C.I.A. chief, Bush met with Noriega (and was certainly briefed about him) that same year.

Hatch's Democratic colleagues on the Judiciary Committee, particularly Dennis DeConcini, failed to demand the public release of the DeFeo Report in 1988, when it might have done them and the country some good. Now that it has been excluded as evidence in Noriega's trial, it is still not too late for a smart, bold senator to insist that the report's contents be declassified. Regardless of one judge's ruling in a Miami courtroom, the scandalous facts behind the Noriega case are anything but "irrelevant."

JOE CONASON

Joe Conason is editor at large of Details *magazine.*

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controlled is itself reeling—its airplanes seized, its labs destroyed, its transportation links severed. The D.E.A., having sought the Medellín cartel's defeat for so long, has finally gotten its wish. None of this, though, has had much effect on the amount of cocaine entering the United States. A kilogram of the drug costs about the same in Miami and Los Angeles as it did in 1989, before the campaign against the cartel got under way.

One reason, of course, is the Cali cartel. With the Medellín cartel routed, the Cali combine has absorbed much of its market. At long last, the D.E.A. seems to have discovered the Cali cartel. In July, *Time* featured a cover story on the cartel that described it in the same lurid terms once reserved for the Medellín cartel. "They are among the richest families in Colombia," *Time* reported, "but, to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, they are the new kings of cocaine, patriarchs of a criminal consortium more disciplined and protected from prosecution than the Sicilian Mafia and now bigger than the Medellín cartel." Relying heavily on D.E.A. sources, the article quoted its head, Robert Bonner, as saying that "the Cali cartel is the most powerful criminal organization in the world. No drug organization rivals them today or perhaps any time in history." Clearly, the agency is planning to open a new front in the Latin American drug war.

It's likely to prove no more successful than the earlier campaigns, for the Colombian cocaine trade is far more amorphous and decentralized than the feds seem to believe. Major syndicates operate not only in Cali but also in Bogotá and Pereira (located about 125 miles west of the capital); in addition, Colombia is home to myriad small entrepreneurs working independently of the giant combines. The Medellín cartel itself, though down, is far from out. Many observers expect that the jailed Escobar, freed from his preoccupation with eluding the authorities and enjoying a free rein in his custom-built prison, will prove an even more effective mover of cocaine than when he was on the loose.

Then, too, Colombia is hardly the only country involved in trafficking these days. With the heat coming down there, the drug lords have been moving their operations into Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia and Peru. Clearly, the Bush Administration's drug-busting strategy in Latin America has been exactly that—a bust.

The Democrats, meanwhile, have offered few alternatives. Although outspokenly critical of Republican policy, they share many of its assumptions. Consider, for example, Senator Kerry's narcotics subcommittee. As a vehicle for exposing U.S. complicity with thugs like Noriega, the subcommittee's hearings in 1988 had a salutary effect. As a forum for analyzing the international drug problem, they were a muddle, full of lofty war-on-drugs grandstanding. Here is a sample passage from Kerry's opening remarks:

> We hope to show the imminent danger posed by continued inattention to the international narcotics relationship. We will hear testimony about the destabilization of whole countries, regions, the support for terrorism, and the subversion of our own laws and institutions. I believe . . . that not only do we face a national security threat ourselves . . . but that other countries are threatened to such a degree that the stability of the Western Hemisphere, certainly the southern Western Hemisphere, is at issue.

Criticizing the Administration for its ineffectiveness, Kerry called for more, not less, U.S. intervention in Panama and other trafficking nations. Not surprisingly, his position was heartily endorsed by such fire-breathers as Jesse Helms and Alfonse D'Amato.

Kerry's hawkish stance is hardly exceptional. This past September, for instance, during a hearing in the House of Representatives, Stephen Solarz urged Administration officials to use herbicides on Peru's coca fields—a potentially disastrous strategy that could drive coca-growing peasants into the arms of the Shining Path guerrillas. Charles Rangel, who has commendably called for more spending on drug treatment and prevention, has also campaigned tirelessly—and thoughtlessly—for an expansion in the D.E.A.'s activities abroad.

Scholarly examinations of the global drug trade tend to be no less simplistic. Over the years a peculiar species of drug-war literature has emerged. Representative of the genre is *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*, by Alfred McCoy, a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin. The book was first published in 1972. McCoy, then a young graduate student, spent eighteen months in Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle investigating links between the C.I.A. and the opium trade. After McCoy testified in Congress about his findings, the C.I.A. demanded to see the manuscript he was working on. McCoy's publisher, Harper & Row, complied, but when the agency insisted on numerous changes McCoy stood firm, and the book was published without revision. Earlier this year, an expanded edition was released to take advantage of renewed public interest in the subject.

At 634 pages, *The Politics of Heroin* is a weighty tome, but its theme can be easily summarized. "Over the past forty years," McCoy writes, "American and allied intelligence agencies have played a significant role in protecting and expanding the global drug traffic." Both in the late 1940s, when it connived with the Corsican and Sicilian mafias in Europe, and in the early 1980s, when it joined with the Afghan rebels, the C.I.A. provided a political and legal shield to groups trafficking in heroin. The pattern was repeated in Central America in the 1980s, when the Nicaraguan *con-*

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tras—protected by the C.I.A.—smuggled cocaine into the United States.

"The CIA's Contra support operation," McCoy writes, "coincided with a major expansion in the Caribbean cocaine trade. . . . By using Contra support aircraft to carry their cocaine, the Medellín cartel's smugglers reduced the risk of seizure." McCoy concludes: "Simply by launching a major covert operation in a strategic drug zone, the CIA contributed, albeit indirectly, to a major expansion of America's cocaine supply."

This is absurd. However much the *contras* may have been involved in drug trafficking—and the record remains sketchy—their contribution to the overall hemispheric trade was altogether insignificant. Every year, the Colombian traffickers send hundreds, if not thousands, of loads northward, by plane, boat and truck. The vast majority of these shipments have nothing whatsoever to do with the C.I.A. Similarly, the Afghan rebels no doubt plied opium, but to conclude that the agency actively protected their trade requires an ideologically inspired leap of faith. The heroin industry, like that for cocaine, is a multibillion-dollar enterprise with an insatiable base of consumers around the world. Certainly it doesn't need the C.I.A. to open markets for it.

In the end, the problem is not the C.I.A. Nor is it the size of the D.E.A. or the restraints imposed on its activities abroad. The problem is that the international drug trade is virtually immune to attack. Heavily armed and fantastically wealthy, the drug lords generally operate in remote fastnesses well beyond the reach of the law. Based in impoverished societies with high rates of unemployment, they can draw on a bottomless pool of recruits; no matter how many workers are killed or arrested, others are always willing to take their place. After ten years of waging war on the *narcos*, it's time to recognize that such a strategy cannot work. It's time, in fact, to recognize that *nothing* we do outside our borders can significantly diminish the amount of drugs entering the country. Only by redirecting our attention from Latin America to the domestic front can we hope to alleviate the crushing problem of drug abuse in America.

Our needs at home are immense. They begin with treatment. Despite greatly increased federal spending in this area, clinics remain grossly underfunded, and waiting periods of weeks are common in cities throughout the country. In the nation's prisons—viritual colonies of drug addicts—treatment remains largely unavailable. Even those who do successfully complete recovery programs often relapse because of the lack of support services. Without more spending on vocational training, continuing education and medical care, the drug problem will continue to fester, especially in our inner cities.

One way or another, it's time to be done with all the foreign sideshows, from the C.I.A. to the Cali cartel, the *contras*, the Afghan rebels, the secret armies, the hidden conspiracies—and Manuel Antonio Noriega.

The Noriega trial is expected to drag on through the fall. Its outcome seems foreordained. Drug trials in this country have extremely high conviction rates, and this one will probably be no exception. If convicted on all counts, Noriega could receive up to 140 years in prison. A draconian sen-

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tence, it might seem—unless one puts it in the broader context of Panamanian politics. One of the great ironies of the Noriega trial is that it ignores the man's really serious crimes—his intimidation of opponents, his stealing of elections, his crackdown on the press, his plundering of Panama's wealth. As a drug trafficker, Noriega was a modest player. As a tyrant, he was indeed a giant in Panama. Should he spend the rest of his days in prison, justice will, in a sense, have been served.

It should, however, have been left up to the Panamanians to make that decision. □

PERESTROIKA AND AFTER

Comrade Ligachev Tells His Side

KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

Yegor Kuzmich Ligachev may have been one of the best-known and most important, but also most poorly understood, political figures in the *perestroika* drama that began to unfold in the Soviet Union in 1985. By 1987 much of the Western media tended to portray the Communist Party's Number 2 leader as the archrival of *perestroika*, a die-hard conservative, even a reactionary, who opposed all the liberalizing political and economic reforms championed by Mikhail Gorbachev. When he retired from the party leadership in 1990, the move was widely regarded here as a victory for the forces of Soviet democracy.

Certainly, Ligachev was a highly controversial figure, the bête noire of the Soviet liberal intelligentsia. His policies and ideological statements, moreover, found little if any sympathy among those American observers of the Soviet Union who favor only those Soviet voices that seem most like their own. But Ligachev's role in Soviet politics after 1985 was a complex one, not given to easy categorization. A longtime provincial party boss in Tomsk, Siberia, Ligachev was brought to Moscow by Yuri Andropov in 1983 to help build a leadership team for the man Andropov hoped would succeed him, Mikhail Gorbachev. Indeed, Gorbachev probably could not have become Soviet leader in 1985 without the support of Ligachev and the provincial party secretaries, whom he represented. With Gorbachev's ascension, Ligachev became a full member of the Politburo and the party's de facto deputy leader. In that capacity, he was instrumental in initiating the reforms known as *perestroika*. By 1988, however, Ligachev began to protest—in the Politburo and other closed party gatherings—what he perceived to be a radicalization of the reform process in several respects: a sweeping re-evaluation of history, a premature introduction of market relations, a swift pace of political reforms and a chaotic upsurge of nationalist movements in the Soviet republics. He became, therefore, a moderating, some would say oppositionist, force inside the Gorbachev leadership.

Today, at 71, Ligachev continues to be an active and controversial political figure in Moscow. He is a self-professed Communist, but his Communism is hardly that of the anti-*perestroika* wing of the party. A longtime anti-Stalinist who accepts the need for a market sector, he argues vehemently against Boris Yeltsin's ban on the Communist Party in Russia. He also remains a strong defender of a united Soviet Union.

In short, Ligachev was present at the creation of *perestroika,* not as its opponent but as a co-founder with Gorbachev. That his views began to depart from those of Gorbachev and his closest associates, including Aleksandr Yakovlev and Eduard Shevardnadze, is not surprising. Differing opinions about the nature of *perestroika* existed within the original leadership team. Times became turbulent, and those differences became more pronounced. Ligachev may be out of power, but the social policy views he represents, though muted amid the clamor of post-coup Moscow, remain widespread not only among Soviet elites but among the Russian citizenry as a whole.

Ligachev is currently a member of the Congress of People's Deputies and the author of a memoir about the *perestroika* years, which will be published by Pantheon in 1992. On November 3, two days after he arrived in New York on a tour of American universities, Ligachev sat down with me for a discussion about Soviet politics before and after the coup.

KvH: *I don't know how familiar you are with Western press reports, but you have been portrayed in the Western media as a villainous figure—the personification of reaction—who tried to thwart the reform process in Soviet politics. To what extent has the Western press, and segments of the Soviet liberal press, misrepresented your position?*

YKL: I would say there is nothing further from the truth. If those people who claim that Ligachev is a conservative, a Stalinist, an opponent of change, if they proceed from the premise that the social order must be replaced in a radical fashion, then apparently they are right. But if they proceed from the fact that *perestroika* began not as a replacement of the Soviet system but as a reformation, then they are wrong. I am for a reformation of socialism. That doesn't imply conservatism, petrifaction. Our system, especially in the Stalin era, was deformed, distorted, and there were many mistakes. There was violence and lawlessness. With *perestroika* our right-wing radicals thought we should do everything fast. But I was against that. Our mistake is that we were not consistent and gradual; that doesn't mean I favor going slow but rather going from one stage to another. I think this is realism in politics.

KvH: *Where did the idea come from that you were an opponent of reform?*

YKL: I've thought about it a lot, and I think it came from Moscow. I think what happened was a consolidation of forces against the figure of Ligachev. I want to impress upon you that in the first two years of *perestroika*, no one in the foreign press wrote about Ligachev as a conservative. I very carefully followed the foreign press. Each day, information was placed on my desk. On the contrary, they wrote a lot about how I was an active assistant of Gorbachev, his advocate. I suppose the idea that I was an opponent began in 1987, when

This interview was translated by Catherine Fitzpatrick.

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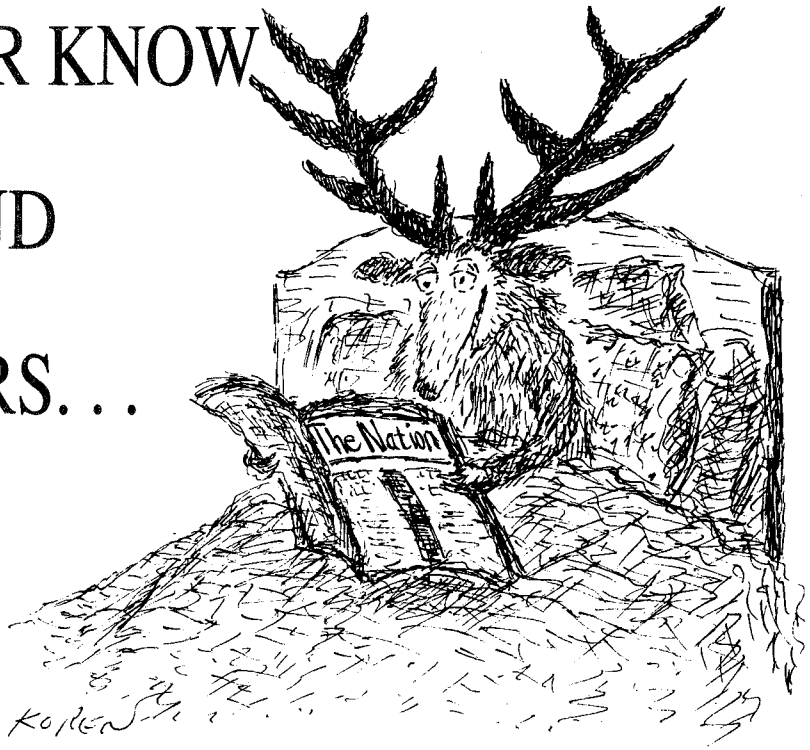

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I spoke very forthrightly and fundamentally against what I would call—if you will forgive me—a "political striptease," against undressing everything in our society. I made a fairly balanced speech, I think. I showed things from both sides, that history has its bright spots and its tragedies. Its heroic and its dramatic moments. The way it was. Under Stalin, all history was portrayed as it was in his *Short Course*, as successes, victories and no defeats. And if anyone spoke about defeat, it could only be Stalin, and God forbid, no one else could. But sometime in 1987, suddenly people started saying our history was terrible. But I made the point that the attempt to show people that *everything* in our history was terrible is an attempt to weaken our people, to deprive it of its historical memory, and it is a way of showing that the socialist choice was mistaken. Recently, these people have even gone further. For the past two years, the Communist Party has had no responsibility for the economy—it was kept out of it. But once again, they are trying to put the blame on the Communists, and once again say that the socialist choice was wrong.

Communism as an ideological tendency does have a future. That is, in a purged form, free from distortion and corruption.

KvH: *What was the turning point? What was the essence of your political disagreement with Gorbachev and other liberals in the Politburo?*

YKL: I understand a lot of things better now. I have had the chance to reflect. But back then, we had to work so hard, there wasn't a chance to think as we should have. It was our misfortune: 9 in the morning until 10 at night every single day; no weekends. But that wasn't the main thing. Besides knowing your allies, you have to know your enemies. That's important in politics. And you have to determine in politics what the main danger is. In the beginning, in the early period of *perestroika*, I agree that the greatest danger in our society was conservatism. At the initial stage there were people who didn't accept the new reforms, for various reasons. Some wanted to return to Stalinism; they had nostalgia for that era. Others were just lazy; they weren't used to working, so they didn't accept it. We began installing law and order, fighting black marketism, alcoholism. And there really were contradictions between the majority in society, who were for progressive measures and changes, and a small but fairly obvious segment of society that did not accept these changes and some that even opposed them. But to the extent to which *perestroika* developed, there was another danger, which came to be the most important danger. Finally, Gorbachev acknowledged it, but only at the end of December 1990, although it was clear even back in 1988, when there were arguments in the Politburo. Unfortunately, Gorbachev and the others didn't understand that the nationalist and separatist movements in the republics were the greatest danger. Then finally, at one of the Central Committee plenums, he said, "I'll say forthright, there is no more serious danger now than rampant nationalism and the incitement of interethnic hatred." If that had been understood in 1988, at the time of Nagorno-Karabakh, I'm sure we would not have the scale of interethnic bloodshed and clashes we have now.

KvH: *Let's talk about recent events. The failed coup of August 19-21 has thrown the country into an even deeper crisis. Recently, some people in Moscow have accused you of having been a secret member of the group that plotted the coup, though no formal charges have been brought against you. Other Moscow reports say you would have replaced Gorbachev as head of the Communist Party had the coup succeeded. Is there any truth in these charges?*

YKL: I am categorically opposed to the methods of the coup plotters. The coup was news to me. I was outside of Moscow, in the suburbs, on August 19. I was absolutely stunned. My first thought was why at this time—when the party was readying itself for the Congress in November or December, when it had a program and many were accepting it—why embark on such a course? As it later turned out, the coup plotters undertook the conspiracy because the Union Treaty was about to be signed, and it didn't correspond with their plans. I think the Union Treaty was acceptable and they should have signed it.

But the main thing is that I am utterly opposed to the use of military force. The Soviet Union is not a country that can solve its problems with the use of tanks. But when I read the statement by the State Committee for the State of Emergency, there were many thoughts and proposals that found resonance with me, and not just with me but with many people—especially as to the question of introducing law and order. Perhaps there were less constructive points about the economic situation. But the analysis of the state of the country was correct. The other day there was an interview with the prosecutors investigating the coup. They said that 70 percent of the letters they've been receiving support the conspirators' program. Their program, not their actions. Remember that the people remained on the sidelines, the people were silent and, with the exception of only a few thousand, did not participate [in the opposition to the coup]. The Russian White House is not Russia, and Moscow is not the country.

KvH: *Many people now say, here and in your country, that the Soviet Union will no longer exist, that the Communist Party's life has come to an end, and that capitalism is coming to your country. Do you agree?*

YKL: Yes, I believe that is a hypothetical possibility. But now there is a battle over what kind of property, what kind of government and what kind of country we will have. I can say with authority, because of the referendum [about the Union], that 75 percent of Soviet citizens were for the preservation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The majority of the population supports public property, but in various forms—for example, collective property, rented property, joint-stock companies. We must fill the consumer market with goods and fundamentally reorient our military-industrial complex to supply

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consumer needs. But you can't solve our problems by the market alone, not in 500 days or 365 days. You just can't organize paradise on earth in that amount of time. Even those who know better than our right-wing radicals admit that modern-day capitalism—to which we could aspire only in the space of decades—cannot solve all ills. Therefore, in my view and that of many others, those who say we need to free up prices and privatize in 365 days are calling for neocapitalism, for an unregulated market, for "wild capitalism."

Politically, people are for power to soviets [local councils] that are profoundly democratized, not weak as they are now. But look what's happened in Moscow under Gavril Popov, the democratic Mayor. All the district executive committees are disbanded, although they were elected, and now there is a system of appointed prefects created by the so-called democrats. If we Communists—and we are completely different Communists; we are not Stalinists—were to do this, they would call it a fascist act. But when Popov does it, it's right. Now people don't know where to go to solve their problems. They've closed down offices, fired workers.

KvH: *What is the future of the Communist Party?*
YKL: I think communism as an ideological tendency does have a future. That is, in a purged form, free from distortion and corruption. I am not aware of any massive turning in or burning of party cards. On the contrary, I get a lot of letters from people who say they are not leaving the party. People are hoping that reason will prevail. Because banning the Communist Party without trial or investigation is against the law. It is a disgrace. It is an antidemocratic act. History illustrates that it's usually been the case—and I hope this doesn't happen in the Soviet Union—that after a Communist Party is closed down, fascist tyranny begins. I think there is a real danger of dictatorship now, because we are exchanging the monopoly of one party for the monopoly of another. The democratic bloc is now monopolizing the politics of the country. See, I don't think you can make the point that after you shut down the Communist Party, then you have democracy. Because it's just the opposite: When you shut down the party, that's part of what stifles democracy.

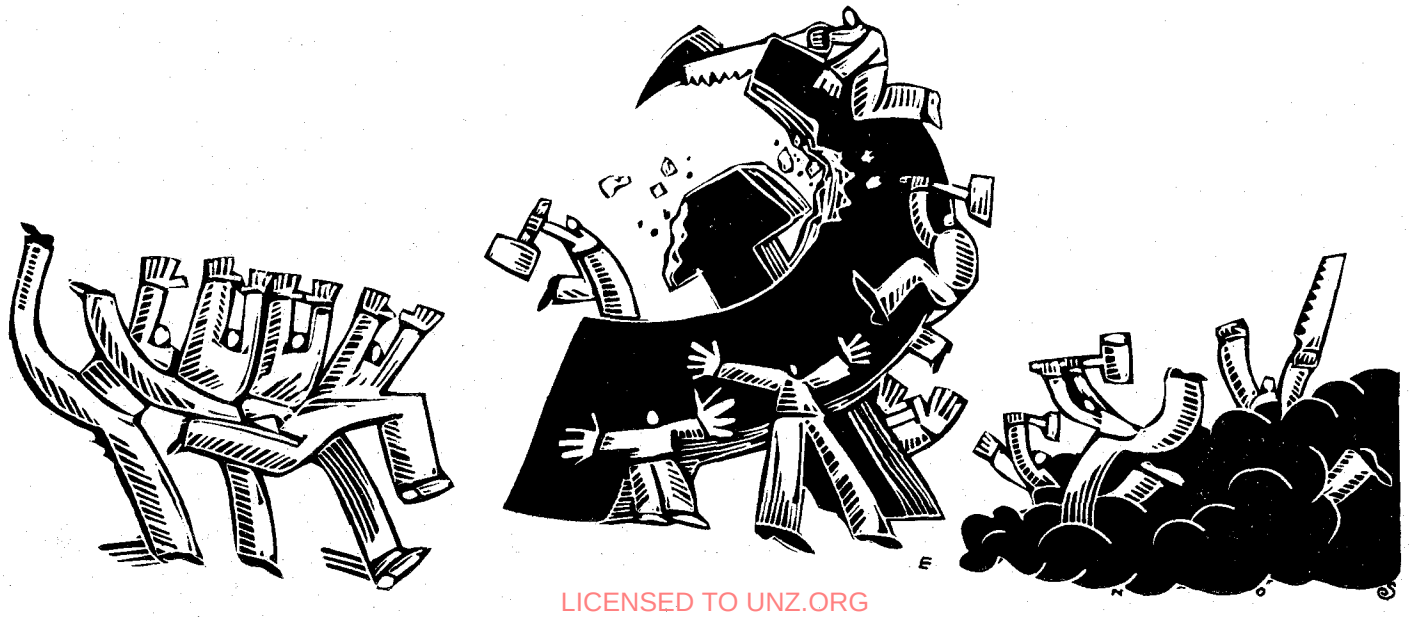
But there is a regrouping of forces going on. New Communist Party organizations are being created. There are the Democratic Communists in Russia, and the leftist forces of a socialist orientation, and then the so-called Communist Initiative movement. In some republics and oblasts [regions], like Ryazan and Bashkiria, there have already been constituent assemblies, where the Communists have essentially renamed themselves and on the basis of draft programs, which will be discussed at a Congress later in December, have formed new parties. A process of re-creation of the Communist organizations is under way. I don't think there will be an All-Union Party because there isn't a united Union.

KvH: *But you think there will be some kind of Communist Party?*
YKL: I think it will be a party of socialist orientation, a party that should be headed by a worker.

KvH: *An electoral party?*
YKL: Yes, a strictly democratic party, for social justice.

KvH: *If there are free elections in the Union or in Russia, do you think such a party could get votes?*
YKL: Everything depends on the economic and social situation. I think in the provinces, during elections, many people will come forward who were in the Communist Party but who will now be in a modernized and reorganized party with a socialist orientation. Because I think the time for the democrats is running out, or will run out very soon, in Moscow and in Leningrad. (I'm sorry, but I'm going to keep calling it Leningrad. I can't bring myself to say St. Petersburg, even though I very much respect the history of that city. And I do respect St. Peter and I respect Peter himself, Peter the Great.)

KvH: *Do you yourself intend to play a role in the founding of such a party?*
YKL: I am involved in serious discussions about the future of the party. But it's premature to talk about this process.



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NATION REPRINTS

S&Ls, Big Banks and Other Triumphs of Capitalism

Robert Sherrill tells the sordid story of the looting decade. It's a feisty account that shows how the S&L crisis was created, how the taxpayers were betrayed by their elected officials and government regulators, who the chief scoundrels are and why the current bailout is a disaster. Most important, Sherrill warns that the Feds, in willful ignorance of the lessons of the S&L disaster, are moving rapidly toward further deregulation of the big banks—a move that could lead to even greater financial disaster. This issue's importance is intensified by today's headlines. *(November 19, 1990)*

The American Neo-Nazi Movement Today

Elinor Langer's well-researched and chilling look at the growth of skinhead, neo-Nazi and white supremacist hate groups with direct ideological links to the original Nazi movement. Langer concludes that something deeply disturbing is indeed happening here—something every American should comprehend and confront. *(July 16/23, 1990)*

How on Earth?—Strategies For a Habitable Planet

The Nation's special Earth Day 1990 issue features bold articles by Barry Commoner and Kirkpatrick Sale outlining down-to-earth technological and political strategies for preserving the planet. Commoner argues that government regulation has failed to persuade American corporations to clean up their act, and Sale argues that Earth Day 1990 commemorated the problem, not the solution. "To succeed," according to the issue's lead editorial, "environmental politics needs a movement." The solutions offered here are radical, but so is the problem. *(April 30, 1990)*

'Fetal Rights'—A New Assault on Feminism

Katha Pollitt focuses on the anti-choice forces' new strategy: persecuting women who carry or give birth to drug dependent or alcoholic children. Pollitt tells how mothers are being portrayed as "the major threat to unborn babies." Already in wide demand for college textbooks and academic courses in many disciplines. *(March 26, 1990)*

Scapegoating the Black Family

Guest-edited and written by African-American women, this important *Nation* issue debunks the myths and exposes the reality of the black family. Margaret B. Wilkerson, Jewell Handy Gresham, Faye Wattleton and others. With a final appeal/challenge to America by speaker, activist and author Ossie Davis. This issue has received widespread attention in academic circles and was nominated for a National Magazine Award. *(July 24/31, 1989)*

The Lords of the Global Village

Mergers and takeovers are transforming the information business, creating companies worth billions of dollars and concentrating power and ownership in the hands of a few. Ben H. Bagdikian, author of *The Media Monopoly*, examines the growth of these giant communication combines, and profiles such media barons as Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell. This special issue is essential to all students of the media, in or out of the classroom. *(June 12, 1989)*

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KvH: *In October Boris Yeltsin promised to begin a program of economic shock therapy in Russia in order to marketize the country. What will come of this?*

YKL: I'll be glad to be proved wrong, but I think it is a great misfortune for the country. You can't put through reforms—even the most progressive—if the entire brunt falls completely on the shoulders of the people. Under the current conditions in our country—and this is not Ligachev talking but our specialists who have done the analysis—if we make such a rapid transition, if we free up prices so quickly, then there will be a fall in production by 30 percent and we will have 20 to 25 million unemployed. In our society, where everything has been very tightly monopolized, strictly controlled, if you free prices without breaking up the monopolies, you're going to get enormous, gigantic leaps in prices. I'm afraid people won't put up with it. There could be a major social explosion.

KvH: *Many in the West now consider Boris Yeltsin to be the real political leader of your country. Do you agree? Is Gorbachev's role over?*

YKL: I do not think so. You see, if you have as your goal only the question of developing the Russian state, then you could agree. We need a leader who can act in a logical way to unite all the peoples and republics. I think after the Economic Union, there will be a political union. It's difficult to say how long this will take. So we need a leader who will care not just about one republic but who will care about all of them as a whole.

No matter how powerful and strong Russia is, it cannot get out of the crisis on its own. Yeltsin is a very energetic and active person, but his recent speeches have caused a lot of alarm. He's made careless remarks about territorial issues, about the creation of an army. Let's wait and see. I wish Boris Yeltsin well, since to a great extent the fate of our Union depends on Russia. But I'm frightened by super-radicalism, freeing the prices immediately, embarking on privatization in three or six months. I'm afraid, as we Russians say, that we're breaking up a lot of firewood.

KvH: *As the Number 2 party leader in 1985, you played a major role with Gorbachev in introducing* perestroika. *But at the same time, you have always strongly defended three things: the integrity of the Soviet Union as a country, the role of the Communist Party, and the Soviet socialist system. Now all three of those pillars of your political life have crumbled. Do you regret having begun the process of reform in 1985?*

YKL: I think that *perestroika* has suffered a defeat in the form it was originally conceived. The so-called anticrisis program, the denationalization of property, the freeing up of prices, the destruction of the planned economy with nothing in its place, the disruption of economic ties, the weakening of the soviets, the collapse of the former Union—all of this bears witness to the fact that *perestroika* failed because it lost its democratic and socialist orientation. I was always an advocate of that democratic and socialist tendency. Perhaps that was the parting of the ways between Gorbachev and Ligachev. As a person who was in the Soviet leadership, of course I bear responsibility. It is a personal tragedy for me. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Cubist Novelist

BILL MARX

THE INVITATION. *By Claude Simon. Translated by Jim Cross. Dalkey Archive Press. 77 pp. $15.95.*

THE ACACIA. *By Claude Simon. Translated by Richard Howard. Pantheon. 289 pp. $24.*

When Claude Simon won the Nobel Prize in 1985, America's cognoscenti rattled their noggins and came up empty—Calvin Trillin quipped that "Susan Sontag better have heard of this guy or we're in trouble." Six years have passed, Simon's 1981 masterpiece, *The Georgics*, has finally been translated (Riverrun Press), and we still haven't caught on. This neglect says as much about our country's literary provincialism and its distrust of experimental fiction as it does about Simon's lofty evasiveness. It hasn't helped that this Gallic enigma has been bear-hugged by theory-rigged academics, whose encomiums to his work as "the metaphorical reflection of its own aesthetic production" have helped seal him in obscurity. True, Simon is anything but simple. But apply a little cerebral elbow grease when reading his exquisitely whorled map of consciousness, and you'll find a poetic travelogue worthy of Proust, Joyce, Céline or Beckett.

With any luck, the recent U.S. publication of the two novels Simon has written since *The Georgics* will pull the writer out of his exile in the hinterlands of the avant-garde. Less unruly than most of Simon's labyrinthine mature fiction, *The Invitation* and *The Acacia* cast an autumnal light on his brooding, fragmentary prose. Together they're a fine introduction to Simon's defiant celebration of language in the face of history's absurd path. And though *The Invitation* grows out of a topical engagement with current events and *The Acacia* harks back to the World Wars, both books revel in the subjunctive tense, the sublime "as if" of the embattled modern imagination, which has long been the touchstone of Simon's reconstructions of things past. Thankfully, he has been lovingly served by his translators, who include Richard Howard (he has brought *The Acacia* into English superbly) as well as Beryl and John Fletcher (*The Georgics*). Perhaps their accomplished renditions will help make clear that with this flinty titan, difficulty need not be a dirty word. Think of Simon as the Wallace Stevens of the historical novel: His "rage for order" baptizes time past and time present in what he calls "that liquid matrix of alphabets."

Simon's multiple streams of consciousness undulate through modern history, snaking from the mythic to the prosaic, from the melodramatic to the comic.

Born in 1913, Simon initially aspired to be a visual artist, thanks to his early—and enduring—passion for the Cubist painters. He didn't turn to writing until after his immersion in the Spanish Civil War and the French Resistance through the whole of the war years. Viewed retrospectively, it's clear that this firsthand descent into the inferno transformed Simon into a novelist obsessed with finding the verbal resources to express the century's traumas, to contain the unspeakable. Indeed, his formal difficulty and dense interrogations of consciousness stem from the horrific disorientation of the front lines, not merely from the insistent discord of the modernist literary temperament—which helps explain why Simon's prose seems forever caught in a contradictory vise between obstinate fact and supreme fiction. In a 1982 interview, Simon argued that this vise is in fact a virtue since "language is ceaselessly menaced by two dangers: on the one hand, that of being considered only a vehicle for meaning; and on the other, as only a structure, for it is always at the same time one and the other, and it is indeed in this twin potential, and their perpetual collisions, that the marvelous ambiguity that grants it such formidable powers seems to me to reside."

Ever since his watershed 1960 novel on World War II, *The Flanders Road*, Simon's meditations on the torments of memory and imagination have taken the shape of loosely autobiographical, turbidly disjointed narratives—mind as bucking bronco, with history's spurs buried deep in its flanks. Instead of set pieces of Proustian high society or a Joycean day in Dublin, Simon's multiple streams of consciousness undulate through modern history, snaking from the mythic to the prosaic, from the melodramatic to the comic. Time leapfrogs from the past to the present and back again, a motion that superimposes decades and transmogrifies his warriors into grotesque archetypes. The zenith of this manifold sensibility is *The Georgics*, with its mystifying points of view, shifting time schemes, typographical tinkering, confusion of identities and dazzling wordplay. Simon's latest fictions, by contrast, waft more gently between the mundane and the fabulous as graceful codas to his magnum opus. At one point in *The Acacia*, World War I cavalrymen seem to float above the ground "as if horse and rider constituted one and the same mythical creature made of some metallic substance, sustained by invisible wings with metal feathers." Later, they are "silhouettes . . . cut out of sheets of zinc in the shooting galleries of country fairs," hovering like ghostly mannequins above the carnage.

Not that Simon has softened: Neither of these volumes capitulates to well-worn conventions of plot and character. Though he has always chafed at being categorized as a practitioner of the *nouveau roman*, Simon shares its disdain for fiction as a mirror of reality as well as its insistence on formal innovation rather than ideological sermonizing. Yet his tenacious faith in the power of language amid the caprices of memory (and, conspicuously, his stoic humanism) distinguishes his work from Robbe-Grillet's clinical sex fantasies and Nathalie Sarraute's stripped-down psychodramas. Often as long as fire hoses, his sentences jump, gambol and somersault with synonyms, metaphoric amplifications, qualifications, illustrative analogies and tense

Bill Marx is a book and theater critic living in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is writing a book on the state of contemporary criticism in the arts.

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changes. His paragraphs are often pages long and studded with parentheses within parentheses. The syntactical arabesques of his prose can leave one feeling like a Sisyphus running breathlessly downhill, rock in pursuit. Still, Simon's writing also remains robustly sensuous, more concerned with being than meaning, as abstract and yet palpable as the Cubist paintings that have continued to exert their influence on the ironic brushwork of his prose, his choice of collage rather than plot as his organizational principle.

This allegiance to kaleidoscopic perspective turns *The Invitation* into surrealist reportage, a mordant odyssey that builds on the technique of oneiric satire that first surfaced in Simon's 1971 novel *Conducting Bodies*, in which a literary conference in Latin America was lambasted for its call for committed literature. In *The Invitation* Simon fires off a compact fictional riff on a group trip he took to Russia a year after winning the Nobel. He never names, just sardonically hints at, the identities of the other fourteen cultural bigwigs along for the propagandistic ride. But unlike the epic brainteasers of *The Georgics*, puzzling out "the second husband of the most beautiful girl in the world" (Arthur Miller) or "the man who played Nero" (Peter Ustinov) is child's play. The emissaries are mysteriously whisked from the Bolshoi Ballet to Lake Baikal, from a recently built city in Central Asia to a fourteenth-century monastery, dogged at every step by bleak weather and even bleaker post-*glasnost* rhetoric.

Amid this drab atmosphere Simon tosses off a few comic flares, but for the most part he is spinning a hallucinogenic yarn, an internal fantasia about a lifeless society that can barely suppress the barbarity beneath its new, and tenuous, veneer of reform. Totalitarian id and Stalinist superego batter away at the facades, haunting the fragile, liberal present with ghosts of skulduggery past. A series of harrowing aural clues, sighs of subterranean anguish, knit the book's short but lethal indictments together. Water cascading down a mountain sounds in Simon's ear like the yelp of the repressed, "as though the voice of some monster, some mocking oracle, relentlessly reached down from the old and monstrous mountain as a heavy bellowing, indifferent, the bearer of some secret without a secret." The memoir/parable is a grim diagnosis of the Russian unconscious, Kafka with a cause, a prophetic look at the energies that are currently tearing the Soviet empire apart.

The Invitation is a bravura performance—even at 77 pages the monologue never sinks into a monotone—though the volume gives us Simon the poetic pamphleteer rather than Simon the sensual modernist, the lyrical chronicler of sorrow, love and regret. For that, you should turn to his latest novel, *The Acacia*, which is among the most moving and elegiac he's written. Once again Simon mines his memories of war and annihilation, as this novel pivots on two of the most personal images in his previous work, the hunt of a mother and child for her husband's grave during World War I (an image that had surfaced in Simon's first novel, 1945's *The Cheat*) and the massacre of a French cavalry unit by German troops early in World War II (a real battle that Simon fought in and refers to throughout his books, particularly *The Flanders Road*). *The Acacia* weaves together the story of two sisters who sacrifice themselves so their brother can rise above the family's peasant existence (he dies early in World War I, his skull shattered as he sits by a tree) and the tale of his son's miraculous escape from the next war's horse-versus-machine debacle. The parents' lives are filtered through the son's mind as the chapters alternate between the two World Wars, with a couple of detours, one going back to 1880 and the other forward to 1982.

As is his wont, Simon reconstructs bits and pieces of his autobiography into a fictional palimpsest, a stylistic tour de force that skillfully jumps across time and space. *The Acacia* leaps from the anesthetizing comforts of the nineteenth-century upper class to the degradations of a prisoner-of-war camp in World War II, from the colonialist ease of the French Foreign Service at the turn of the century to a hideous episode in which the wounded narrator joins two crazed officers as they ride their horses down a road menaced by snipers and airplanes. Haunted by images of the father's death and the son's uncanny survival, the book moves through the contours of the narrator's mind—his effort to understand his parents' lives by glancing at their old postcards and letters, his attempt to make sense of combat by seeing it as an emblem of nature's indifference. According to Simon, history eats us alive: "It was History which was in the process of devouring them, engulfing, alive and pell-mell, horses and riders, not to mention harnesses, saddles,

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weapons, even spurs, in its impassive and imperforable ostrich stomach where the digestive juices and rust would manage to reduce everything, including the sharp-toothed rowels of the spurs, to a viscous and yellowish magma." It is from this nightmare that consciousness struggles interminably to wrest some sense.

The Acacia, like *The Georgics*, *The Flanders Road* and 1967's *Histoire*, treats history as anything but a backdrop, personifying the century's bloodbaths as a single monstrous presence that gorges on human dignity. And this process of textual weaving, on both individual and collective levels, lends Simon's tales their deep poignancy, their existential sense of pity and terror.

In this era of minimalists to whom history means recalling which jam they spread on their morning toast, maximalists like Simon, who would lead us through the mazes of the past, are precious guides. A poet in sensibility, he sees language as a means of comfort, a gnarled apology that attempts to encompass the cruelty of experience.

At the end of *The Acacia* the narrator sits in front of a blank piece of paper, perhaps to commence a writing career. He looks out the window and sees: "One of the branches of the big acacia growing in the garden almost touched the wall of the house, and he could see the closest fronds lit by his lamp, their leaves like feathers faintly palpitating against the darkness, the oval leaflets tinged a raw green by the electric light and occasionally stirring like aigrettes, as though suddenly animated with a movement of their own, as if the whole tree were waking, shaking itself, freeing itself, after which everything subsided and they became motionless again." Yet Simon detects a stirring of renewing spirit in this dark: Like Stevens's "palm at the end of the mind," Simon's genealogical tree of life "stands on the edge of space./The wind moves slowly in the branches./The bird's fire-fangled feathers dangle down." □

Lovely to Look At

DANIEL HARRIS

THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE. *By Amy Janello and Brennon Jones. Harry Abrams. 241 pp. $60.*

THE SMART MAGAZINES: 50 Years of Literary Revelry and High Jinks at Vanity Fair, The New Yorker, Life, Esquire and The Smart Set. *By George H. Douglas. Archon (The Shoe String Press). 229 pp. $27.50.*

THE MAGAZINE IN AMERICA: 1741–1990. *By John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman. Oxford. 433 pp. $35.*

Whereas readers could choose from only two publications when magazines began to appear in the Colonies in 1741, today there are some 17,000—a list that includes periodicals as specialized as "zines" (hybrids of newsletters and magazines) or as intermittent as "sporadicals" (a neologism for publications that are both sporadic and radical). As advertisers go after more and more specific markets, publications have cropped up to serve the needs of every conceivable job, hobby and fetish—from Mattel's *Barbie* to Boyd MacDonald's *Straight to Hell: The Manhattan Review of Unnatural Acts*, from the trade publication *Hogs Today* to the Hollywood spinoff *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, from the mouthwatering *Bon Appetit* to a magazine of an entirely different flavor, *The Taste of Latex*, a publication catering to a hard-core bondage-and-domination readership.

In celebration of the 250th anniversary of the industry, the Magazine Publishers of America has produced *The American Magazine*, a lavish coffee-table album splendidly illustrated with images that run the gamut from saccharine covers by Norman Rockwell idealizing war to photographs of Hugh Hefner in his bedroom presiding over a seraglio of barefoot Bunnies. The book attempts to capture something of the diversity and liveliness of the history of American publications by dishing out a smattering of insider dirt, magazine lore and behind-the-scenes anecdotes about the meteoric rise and fall of the country's most notorious press barons. It provides an excellent chapter on the magazine cover and an even better one on famous advertisements: a daring 1949 photograph of a blouseless woman, her arms triumphantly outstretched, proudly wearing her Maidenform bra; or Bruce Weber's rapturous celebration thirty years later of a sun-baked Adonis clad only in Calvin Klein underwear, reclining like a totem against an indeterminate sculptural form made of pristine adobe.

But despite the visual sumptuousness of *The American Magazine*, the essays themselves are full of inchoate generalities about topics as unwieldy as "Confronting Reality: Nonfiction in the Magazine" or "Shaping Opinion: The Magazine and Society." The telling irony of this sanitized portrait of the industry by the official apparatchiks at the Magazine Publishers of America is that it is much more interesting to look at than to read, as if it were aping the stale mannerisms of the contemporary magazine. Carrying over into book publishing the bad habits it acquired from another industry altogether, *The American Magazine* is itself a disturbing testament to the visual wealth and intellectual bankruptcy of a field whose innovations in the long run have proved to be more pictorial than literary.

A much less ambitious and comprehensive undertaking, George Douglas's *The Smart Magazines* is a glib and anecdotal survey of five early twentieth-century publications that he somewhat nostalgically and, in my opinion, unjustifiably identifies as the leaders of the high renaissance of the American magazine—*Vanity Fair*, *The New Yorker*, *Life*, *Esquire* and *The Smart Set*—publications he is quick to admit have deteriorated over the decades into shabby, dentist-office entertainment. From their origins in nineteenth-century fashion and humor magazines, he chronicles the evolution of what he considers the house organs of anti-Victorianism until they emerged in their heyday in the twenties and thirties as publications of unprecedented urbanity and wit. Along with amusing stories such as how *Esquire*'s first editor, Arnold Gingrich, lured Hemingway to the magazine with assurances that it would not be a "sissy" publication but would have "ample hair on its chest and adequate cojones," Douglas gives us detailed histories of the establishment of the editorial machines that eventually enabled the consolidation of some of the major publishing empires of our time.

Strewn with words like "joie de vivre," "jaunty," "slick" and "upper crust," *The Smart Magazines* subscribes wholeheartedly to the legends surrounding institutions like the Algonquin Round Table, whose members' bon mots, however apocryphal, embody a quality Douglas

Daniel Harris is a columnist for The Quarterly. *His essays and reviews have appeared in* Harper's, Salmagundi, The Washington Post *and the* Los Angeles Times.

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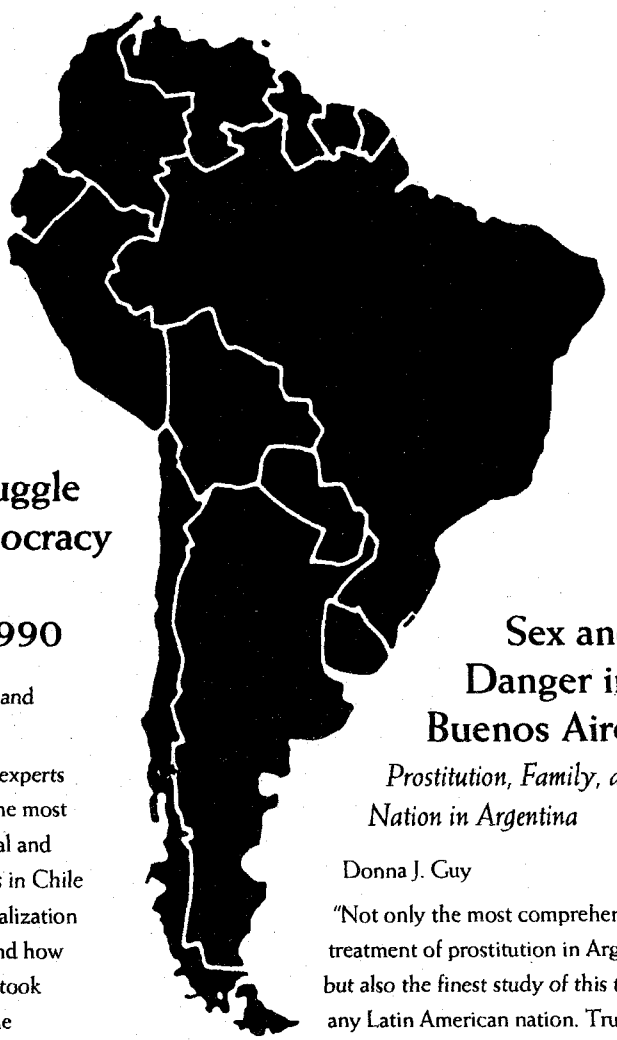
singles out as the sine qua non of magazine excellence, "smartness." The use of this objectionable epithet to refer to a cluster of magazines that were expressly designed "for smart sets or social elites" and that formulated for the American public certain fashionable ideals of patrician insouciance (ideals subscribers were encouraged to emulate in their own behavior) represents a crucial step in the development of the relation of the American magazine to its readers.

Although it is now the common practice of media commentators to cast wistful, retrospective glances at the satiric giants of the twenties and thirties while reviling their contemporary equivalents, the role that these magazines played in the daily lives of their readers as tantalizing surrogates of high society established the precedent for today's chic glossies, which continue to exert the same manipulative effect on their audience. In the early twentieth century the function magazines served for their readerships became personal, behavioral, psychological—not intellectual but social. They did not create culture, they created class and classiness.

Never before had average, middle-class Americans achieved the intimate access to lives materially superior to their own, lives of affluence and leisure that, when packaged so neatly within the covers of magazines, suddenly seemed so close and obtainable. What Douglas is inclined to view as a great leap forward in sensibility from the stodgy and prescriptive earnestness of nineteenth-century publications to the sassiness and irreverence of periodicals like *The New Yorker* and *Vanity Fair* can in fact be viewed as a perversion of the function of the twentieth-century magazine from conveying information and stimulating ideas to projecting alternate visions of the self.

John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman's exhaustive undertaking *The Magazine in America: 1741–1990* largely compensates for the inadequacies of both Douglas's quixotic study and the remorselessly upbeat *The American Magazine*, whose uncritical perspective immediately discredits it as the authorized, hagiographic history of the trade. *The Magazine in America* charts major changes in the sensibility of American readers. It gives us a complete picture of how we got from mid-nineteenth-century publications like the *Lady's Book*, which was so mawkishly puritanical that it refused to mention the expression "chicken breasts" in its recipes, preferring instead the much more genteel "chicken bosoms," to contemporary men's magazines that, far from exhibiting such tender scruples, function for the American male as outright "boob bait," to use an expression with which Mencken derided the early twentieth-century equivalents of publications like *Hustler* and *Penthouse*.

The authors are also particularly adept at exploring the parasitic relationship between magazines and advertising. Although it is difficult for us to imagine, accustomed as we are to publications in which fragmented columns of text are lost in a blur of images, periodicals began to compete for the attention of advertisers only in the late nineteenth century, after a long period in which editors relied so exclusively on revenue from subscriptions that they were often forced to publish querulous notes dunning their readers for unpaid bills. Editors were not even above writing about their own wretched poverty as wage earners who depended on their audience's largesse in order to fend off, as one destitute editor put it, "the wolf," who, "during the last distressful winter . . . often appeared at the threshold and howled at the ears" of his family. Only during the 1880s and



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1890s, when competition with newspapers caused the prices of magazines to plummet from a prohibitive 35 cents to a dime or even a nickel, did circulations swell so dramatically that American publishers were able for the first time to offer advertisers a national forum for their products. By 1907, advertising had made such devastating inroads on most periodicals that it was now swallowing up more than 50 percent of the pages of any given mass-circulation monthly, a statistic that naturally led most publishers to shape their editorial content to appeal to both readers *and* businesses.

According to *The Magazine in America* and *The American Magazine*, the major trends at the moment include publications that, rather than seeking to expand their readership, hone them down into elite cadres of loyal followers with both the willingness and the wherewithal to consume the goods they advertise. Market "penetration" has replaced market "circulation" as the goal of contemporary businesses, with the result that the general-interest publication is gradually losing ground to the specialty magazine. Extreme specialization is definitely the wave of the future. Advances in printing technology now enable publishers to "personalize" editions or tailor the content and advertisements of each issue to the needs of particular readers according to demographic information pirated from their credit-card records (or even acquired from moles planted by organizations like the Advertising Research Foundation, which actually operates a cloak-and-dagger espionage unit that cases out beauty parlors and barber shops, public places in which people can be observed reading magazines). In one of the most arduous feats of personalization thus far, *Farm Journal* has produced 8,896 separate editions of a single issue appealing to farmers of various sorts in different regions of the country, while *American Baby* demonstrates a disconcerting omniscience about its subscribers' due dates by sending them with unfailing accuracy either the pre- or postnatal edition.

When taken to the futuristic extremes set forth in the final chapters of *The American Magazine* and *The Magazine in America*, specialization would have disastrously undemocratic consequences for a media establishment that critics as farsighted as Ben Bagdikian and Herbert Schiller have already indicted for its elitism. Whole sectors of the population, namely the poor, would be excluded from the public forum if magazines began to target only those whose demographic profile was attractive enough to merit periodicals catering to their special interests. In the last few decades, swollen conglomerates have been devouring smaller, privately owned outlets lower on the journalistic food chain until all that remains of our nostalgic fantasies of an unfettered press is a small pool of lazy leviathans who swim amicably around in circles digesting their acquisitions. The picture of the future presented in these recent books on magazines raises even further questions about the undemocratic and inaccessible nature of publications increasingly devoted to mining the rich lodes of previously unexploited consumeristic niches. □

Politics of Ukrainian Museums

EDWARD CHAPPELL

This Sunday, 700 miles from Moscow, a quiet group of worshipers makes its way through the woods and enters a small Ukrainian Catholic church—one of those wonderful old rural churches with three towers, finished with multiple roofs and onion domes topped by iron crosses. Inside, the congregation stands shoulder to shoulder in the outer rooms as music from an unseen choir drifts down from the loft. The priest, swinging a censer, appears through a carved and painted screen. Adorned with icons, the screen stands under a domed central enclosure of tightly fitted logs. The service evokes a strong sense of mystery. Much of the priest's activity takes place in a third space behind the screen, where he can be heard but only occasionally glimpsed through a richly molded and pierced door. The priest is dressed in figured silks with gold trimmings. His raiment contrasts sharply with the everyday clothing of the worshipers. The supreme moment comes when the doors are opened and the congregation sees the transubstantiation of wine and bread into the blood and flesh of Christ.

Such services have been rare in the Ukraine for half a century, but they have become increasingly common in the past year, with liberalization of Soviet policy toward churches and now sovereignty and probably independence for the republic. What makes this particular scene unusual is the fact that it is taking place in a museum, one of the many Eastern European open-air museums that collect and exhibit historic buildings for their antiquarian interest and ethnographic value.

Most open-air museums in the Soviet Union and its previous client states are relatively new. Many grew out of 1960s ethnographic studies undertaken to enrich designs for modern socialist housing. Some, like the Romanian Village and Folk Art Museum in Bucharest, were begun in the 1930s, but most are little more than a decade old and still under construction. The ambitious Hungarian Open Air Museum at Szentendre, north of Budapest, confidently awaits the day when it will portray peasant cultures from all the regions inside Hungary's borders as they existed before World War I, but so far only parts of two villages are finished and open to the public. Construction of an impressive network of open-air museums is under way in the Ukraine, including one of national scope and more than a half-dozen dealing with specific parts of the republic.

Within the past year, state-sponsored folk museums throughout the Soviet Union have begun to assume an extraordinary role in the cultural life of their regions, one never intended by most Communist Party leaders who underwrote them. This development has implications for museums of folk culture everywhere in the world.

The politics of interpretation plays a central, though often unacknowledged, role in deciding what museum programs will teach. American museum planners often insist that their institutions are apolitical. Only challenges to accepted dogma in museum exhibits, like the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American Art's recent "The West as America," are labeled as political [see Eric Foner and Jon Wiener, "Fighting for the West," July 29/August 5]. Hundreds of unconsidered retellings of consensus history have not stirred the blood of newspaper editors and retired Librarians of Congress the way this show has. One question worth asking at the end of any museum exhibit is, Did it make me think? Museum programs that challenge us to reconsider the beatific destiny of English-speaking conquest seem less acceptable to reviewers than

Edward Chappell is an architectural historian working in Williamsburg, Virginia.

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those treading on safer ground, like the current show at the National Gallery that, despite its pose as a study of Albert Bierstadt as entrepreneur, focuses more on his use of clouds and light to capture the drama of American landscape.

The values and dangers of museum politics have long been openly acknowledged in Eastern Europe. Until recently, museums there presented Marxist interpretations as uncritical as the consensus American shows preferred by Daniel Boorstin. Museums in the United States have mostly portrayed a happy past in which farm tenants and industrial laborers seldom questioned the authority of their betters. Similarly, in Eastern European states every old mansion and monastery has been used to illustrate oppression of the workers prior to the arrival of the Bolshevik liberators. Yet the pre-Gorbachev politics of open-air museums was often complex and interesting. Clearly, ethnographic research was used to demonstrate how dark life was before Lenin, and bad old peasant dwellings were contrasted with modern socialist housing patently superior to that occupied by everyone but the party elite. As Ukrainian architect Anatole Vassilievitch Matvienko predictably put it, the Museum of Folk Life and Architecture in Kiev would trace the long history of the Ukrainian people "from the darkness and backwardness of the pre-revolutionary epoch to the enlightenment of socialist reality." Planners subverted Leonid Brezhnev's scheme for a model Soviet village at the Kiev museum, but their alternative, a collection of new model houses constructed by builders from the various regions already represented by traditional folk buildings at the museum, presents a colorful and well-groomed suburban vignette as unrealistic as that envisioned by the former general secretary. Further, the sorting of re-created farmsteads into such categories as "poor peasant" and "lower nobility" was often crude and arbitrary.

Still, there is little evidence that Eastern European museum planners manipulated their representations of folk culture to make it appear that life was worse than it actually was. If anything, they shared the almost universal curatorial proclivity to portray a world that was materially better than most pre-industrial people actually experienced. As at most museums in capitalist countries, exhibited domestic settings were shown as scrupulously clean and were furnished with the best ritual objects. Embroidered pillows stacked high on the beds and polychromed dishes lined up along the shelves had precedents in real households. Yet, as historian Myron Stachiw has observed, the extent to which museums used such objects represents more a celebration of the richness of peasant life than a realistic portrayal of what that life was actually like.

By celebrating ethnic distinctions, folk museums have helped to undermine the authority of a dominant socialist culture, just as the Celtic Revival writings of William Butler Yeats questioned the validity of the Anglo-Protestant Ascendancy before the Irish uprising of 1916. In a climate of enforced unity, drawing boundaries between people can be a subversive activity. To that extent museum ethnographers were always, in the words of Maria Kaldy at the open-air museum at Szentendre, "the opposition party, even when it was unpopular." Gaelic street signs and Balkan songfests were no clarion calls to revolution, but they did enunciate the distinctions between "us" and "them," between what is indigenous and natural versus what is foreign.

Today, Eastern European folk museums play prominent roles in the cultural renewal associated with emerging nationalism. Musical groups performing traditional songs publicly for the first time find large audiences at the museums that represent their regional culture. Couples come to learn about nearly forgotten wedding rituals, and for their marriage ceremonies choose museum churches like those at the Ukrainian Museum of Folk Architecture and Everyday Life in Lviv over secular Palaces of Happiness. Reformed congregations negotiate with curators about the return of religious objects rescued over the years from derelict churches. Peasant shirts and embroidered towels (80-year-old artist and dissident Ivan Makarovich Honchar calls them "the national flag of the Ukraine") are recognized as symbols of liberation. For a population in search of ethnic roots, museums remain the richest source of these and other highly charged images. Having long guarded what they said about re-created village scenes, museum workers now speak openly about what these models of cultural distinction may mean to their visitors.

Historical subjects have taken on a strong nationalistic complexion in the Soviet republics. Increasingly, Ukrainian archeologists are turning attention to the remains of the ancient Kievan Rus, a rich and powerful kingdom whose heyday from the ninth through the thirteenth

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centuries is seen as the last time the land was not dominated by foreign forces. "Russified" baroque details are stripped away from churches to reveal the alternating courses of brick and stone that characterize earlier Rus masonry, and there is serious thought of reconstructing the extraordinary log stronghold of Tustan built by the Rus atop stone outcroppings as a defense against Hungarian invaders.

A Ukrainian Catholic priest whose church recently reopened showed me a collection of religious statues and gravestones and an 1848 marker erected to celebrate the abolition of serfdom, all of which had long ago been broken up and tossed in a river by Soviet officials. The congregation had retrieved the fragments and brought them together as a shrine in the newly tended church. "For years we have eaten only bitter fruit," he said, several weeks before the coup. "Now we have tasted sweeter fruit and we will not go back to the bitter."

There could be few landscapes with greater contrasts than the southeastern side of Kiev, where a 335-foot stainless steel statue of the Soviet Motherland dominates an enclave of small, presocialist flats. Around the statue is a vast totalitarian theme park called the Ukrainian State Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45 that includes an open-air museum of military hardware and a huge mound pierced by a brutalist tunnel peopled with oversized bas-reliefs of soldiers, their arms the size of oil drums and rifles the size of cannon, all rushing forward to defeat the Fascist enemy. Officially the park commemorates the Soviet people's resistance to the German invasion, urging Ukrainians to embrace the unity of the republics. But the message is also evident that overwhelming force can be turned on the people themselves, who have been prone to different loyalties. Furthermore, it is no accident that the earthworks block the view from the Dnieper River of the seventeenth-century Monastery of the Caves, which includes the only imposing group of Ukrainian Orthodox churches left standing in Kiev. Many of the other great Kievan churches were demolished in the 1930s as part of Stalin's campaign to erase the remains of a decadent Ukrainian past—symbols of "bourgeois nationalism"—and to replace them with a Capital Center of the Soviet Ukraine, most of which was never built.

Ironically, the upheld sword of the Motherland statue casts its long shad-

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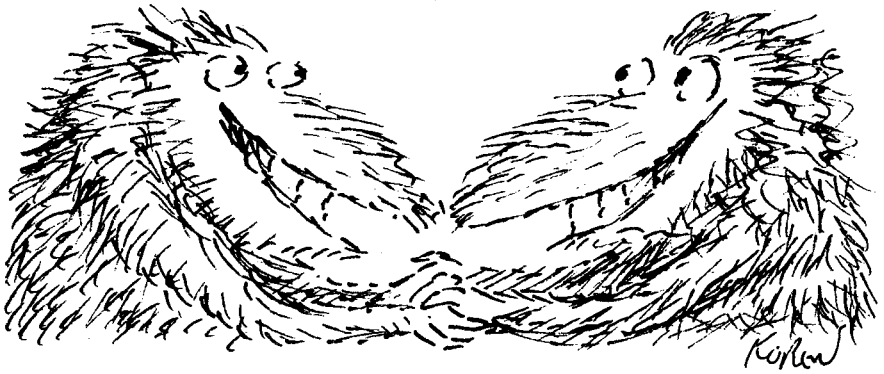

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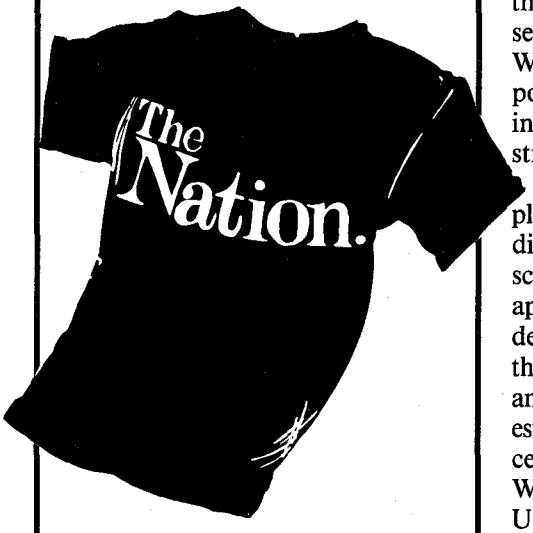

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ow on the modest apartment of Ivan Honchar. For decades, he has walked the roads of the Ukraine collecting and recording the folk artifacts of his region. Because he has remained outspoken about the relationship between Ukrainian culture and national sovereignty, he long suffered under official sanctions. Only in the past two years has he received large commissions for his sculptures, which are both physically powerful and thoughtful. While the statues in the Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War celebrate a blind instinct to fight, his portray people whose minds are engaged in choices about how to employ their strength.

Now the Ukrainian people contemplate building a museum to preserve and display the thousands of artifacts and sculptures crowded together in Honchar's apartment. The statue of the Motherland, derisively called the Tin Lady by much of the population, is likely to be pulled down and salvaged for materials. And the greatest of the monastic churches, the eleventh-century Uspenskyi Sobor, destroyed in World War II, may be reconstructed. Ukrainians, like the people of other Soviet republics, are banishing imposed symbols and resurrecting old ones. The delicately carved spoons and painted eggshells that fill Honchar's rooms now seem more powerful than the vast Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War and more likely to survive the ages. They express the stubborn if tenuous survival of Ukrainian culture.

For several years, these competing visions of the past have corresponded with a potentially violent reality. Symbols are important in lands like the Ukraine, where local resources have long been extracted to build monuments celebrating foreign heroes. Virtually all the statues of Lenin disappeared in the western Ukraine a year ago, and memorials to native martyrs and patriots have begun to take their place. Just who the patriots are is not always clear in the complex modern history of this republic. In 1942, the contest between Hitler and Stalin left Ukrainians with an unsavory choice of bedfellows. Being anti-Soviet could also mean being pro-Fascist. Despite the nearly complete lack of bloodshed, recent changes have not gone unchallenged. Old-line Communists were blamed for blowing up new monuments to Evhen Konovalets and Stepan Bandera, Ukrainian liberation leaders before and during World War II. In response, arsonists (reportedly from the Independent Ukrainian Youth Association) destroyed an exhibition house at the Museum of Folk Architecture and Everyday Life in Lviv because it was the home of Mykola Ivanovich Kuznetsov, a Soviet partisan and hired assassin whose killing of German officers in World War II led to the execution of hundreds of innocent Ukrainian civilians in reprisal. Since then, replacement monuments to Konovalets and Bandera have been bombed. As Myron Stachiw put it in early August, "There is a battle under way in the Ukraine over whose story will be told. For now, the attacks are not directed at living individuals, as in the similarly bitter Ulster situation. Here, they are still confined to monuments and symbols." Renewed Russian assertions of sovereignty over Ukrainian territory by Boris Yeltsin and people in the streets of Moscow, and initial resistance in Kiev to signing a new economic pact with the other Soviet republics, leave uncertain just how the past will serve the future.

In such circumstances, folk museums are potent instruments of political change because they provide visible metaphors for cultural survival. Evocative old buildings and their contents can help people define themselves and their culture, not in complex, introspective ways, as in the plays of Vaclav Havel or Heiner Müller, but in simple, easily comprehensible terms. One of their chief virtues is broad accessibility. The chief danger for museums of national culture, though, is that they can also cultivate nativist impulses, defining what is native too narrowly and encouraging the national majority to lay sole claim to the land. Art historian Boris Voznitsky makes the point explicitly when he observes that museums such as his at Olessko Castle should collect the objects and celebrate the artistic creativity of *all* citizens, not just those whose ancestors settled the country long ago and in sufficient numbers to view themselves as exclusively the indigenous residents.

This is particularly important in the emerging Eastern European states, where one of the central challenges will be to keep xenophobic zeal from replacing the old totalitarian control.

The freedom to tell the truth about mass killings and cultural genocide has often not yet extended to the minorities that have suffered most. Many now free to present their own version of history seem not yet prepared to tolerate others. Among the most heartening signs has been the Ukrainian government's official recognition of its people's participation in the 1941 Babi Yar massacre and

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earlier pogroms that killed more than 100,000 Jews. Like the discovery and reinterment of mass burials from Stalin's Ukrainian purges, the Babi Yar commemoration has challenged the republic to confront the darkest parts of its modern past and allowed the survivors to speak, in the words of Raisa Dashkovskaia, so that "the younger generation will understand." Generally, though, museums have not yet recognized the obvious role they have to play.

Some museums have actually widened rifts between antagonists. Ignoring the Jewish population, Kiev's Museum of Folk Life and Architecture underscored the perception of Ukrainian nationalism as a Christian movement when it celebrated the anniversary of the declaration of sovereignty in July by raising a cross on the hillside overlooking the museum's village scenes. Minority rights seem low on the agendas of museums pulled swiftly into the mainstream of public consciousness by the consequences of *glasnost* and the dissolution of the Communist Party.

European open-air museums commonly go to great lengths to present a full range of geographic variation in what they see as indigenous material culture. From roof shapes to belt stitching, folk objects are illustrated by examples found in every subregion. Houses, haystacks and grave markers are arrayed with the same purpose as objects in conventional ethnographic museums to reveal material distinctions among the different sections of the land. What is missing more consistently in open-air museums than in ethnographic galleries is the treatment of distinctions among minority ethnic groups. Ethnically determined class relations remain an unexplored subject for most Eastern European folk museums, which seldom even place minority nationalities on the stage.

There are no Jewish buildings in Ukrainian folk parks, just as Turkish material is rare in Bulgarian museums, Greek material in Albanian ones. Historic "Saxon" villages recently abandoned by Romanian Germans are of little concern to cultural preservationists there.

Exclusionary museum presentations are not confined to Eastern Europe. By omitting Africans from "the great cultures that created America," the Museum of American Frontier Culture in Staunton, Virginia, joins countless other history museums in quietly suggesting that African-Americans and later arrivals have no place in the ranks of our heroic ancestors.

Some museums speak with a different voice. In New York City, the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, Chinatown History Museum and Lower East Side Tenement Museum remind us that not all our predecessors were rural pioneers speaking English or German dialects. There has been impressive progress among some Virginia museums in dealing with race relations. Even Richmond's Museum of the Confederacy has just mounted a show with provocative perspectives on slavery and the lives of black people in the pre-Civil War South. However modest its intentions, Old World Wisconsin, west of Milwaukee, is a good model for a responsible open-air museum. It uses thoughtfully planned vignettes of preindustrial life to suggest that communities are more healthy when the diversity of cultural origin is acknowledged and respected.

We should not see the lessons as too easy or obvious. Portraying relations between Finns and Norwegians in Wisconsin is less risky than those between Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab or Palestinians and Israelis on the West Bank. It's no surprise that there is a museum called Old World Wisconsin but none called Inner City Detroit. Simply allowing all people to air their version of history does not insure a lessening of deep cultural and religious antagonisms. Ethnic hatreds often defy peaceful solutions. But museums can make useful contributions by offering opportunities to see other people outside our arguments with them and by providing historical perspectives that are free of the party line. They can confront some of the political causes of ethnic enmity—how the superpowers played chess with European national boundaries after the two World Wars, for example. By dealing critically with the messiness of historical change rather than portraying culture as unnaturally pure and free of manipulation, they can help us to ponder the impulses that lead people to cheat and kill one another.

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, near Belfast, has long attempted to help the people of Northern Ireland understand the forces that have divided them. With a striking sense of optimism, the Ulster-American Folk Park in County Tyrone has recently begun an active program of bringing together young schoolchildren from adjoining Roman Catholic and Protestant schools to learn about their shared traditional culture. After mastering the art of weaving or other crafts, the children perform demonstrations in their communities, gathering parents from both persuasions, often for the first time after years of living within sight of one another.

Museums that influence the self-perceptions of people in emerging European nations need to promote these kinds of encounters and the reflection they produce. Divisive cultural issues should be treated more energetically in this country as well, where the presentation of multiple cultures is now under attack in universities as undermining national unity and intellect. In a society of increasing ethnic diversity, museums as well as schools have a role to play in confronting cultural conflict and teaching tolerance among the combatants. □

FILMS.

STUART KLAWANS

Life Is Sweet
Overseas
Billy Bathgate

Jane Horrocks might have won her role in Mike Leigh's new film, *Life Is Sweet*, by virtue of her name alone. It sounds like a combination of *horrors* and *bollocks*—just right for the character of Nicola, the 20-ish bulimic whose raging need, impossible to satisfy and impossible to deny, occupies the center of this film. Nicola is a walking hyperbole. Her furious, flame-colored hair threatens to overrun anything that gets in its way. Her eyes, half-hidden behind the red tumult, hop around like little birds trying to evade a raptor; her lip, on the left side, can't seem to keep from pulling upward, no doubt to vent the steam that's built up in her bubbling head and wracked body.

When someone gets so far out of kilter, it's often because she is acting out not only her own distress but that of her whole family. So take a look at the unfailingly cheerful, decent people who surround Nicola. Her twin sister, Natalie (Claire Skinner), a plumber by trade, has a face that's about as expressive as a set of steam pipes. She keeps her hair cropped short, her eyes clear and alert behind her glasses, her lips straightened to a perfect line, which she disturbs only to speak a few carefully chosen words. The mother, Wendy (Alison Steadman), 40-ish and pretty, greets all events with a uni-

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form and automatic rattle of laughter. She works in a store selling baby clothes (where her unprovoked good spirits and blithe acceptance of sexual stereotypes appall at least one of her customers); but when we first see her, during the opening credits, she's engaged in a second and even more characteristic job, leading a happy, happy, happy dance class for little girls. As for Andy, the father (Jim Broadbent), he shambles about with the amiability of a lazy old dog. At night and on weekends, he wanders off the leash, invariably finding his way into the pub and a state of stupefaction. Otherwise, he works like a dog—as the chef of a big institutional kitchen. No wonder Nicola gags.

Now, had anyone other than Mike Leigh created these characters, with all their precisely observed details of lower-middle-class British suburbia, you might expect kitchen-sink melodrama. But as in his previous films (most notably *High Hopes*), Leigh refuses to sneer at the forced optimism of working people. Some observers—the ones who can afford to—might say that Nicola's family is rotten with denial. To Leigh, they're just trying to get through the day; and though he might not approve of all their methods, he won't judge them, either. That's why this "comedy" (as a valorous but bet-hedging distributor calls it) plays so lightly, while touching on such terrible pain. Leigh sympathizes with Nicola, but he won't adopt her point of view.

You can see a kind of charitable evenhandedness just in the way Leigh places his camera. He prefers the neutral-observer viewpoint, which is best known from the work of another great director of acting ensembles, Howard Hawks. (Neutral does not necessarily mean unengaged. Compare *Life Is Sweet*—if you must—with Norman Jewison's nerveless compositions and flabby transitions, more fatty tissue than tendon, in *Other People's Money*. You'll understand why Leigh, though without self-advertisement, is a visual artist.) Leigh's real masterstroke, though, the bit of comic invention that puts you firmly on the side of the "normal" characters, is his introduction of a second grotesque, this one from outside the family—someone who, in the context of the film, takes the onus off Nicola, much as Nicola in the context of her family bears away the others' burdens.

This character is Aubrey (Timothy Spall)—a pudgy fellow whose wildly misguided efforts to dress like an American teenager make him seem younger than he is, and even dumber. He's a social climber who has no idea where to find the ladder, a would-be man-about-town who's so sexually desperate his libido will attach itself to anything with a high voice. While Nicola, with the secret complicity of her family, is torturing herself with her cycle of bingeing and vomiting, Aubrey is busy inaugurating The Regret Rien, a restaurant with an Edith Piaf theme and a choice of dishes even the English would find disgusting.

In some ways, Aubrey reminds me of another Mike Leigh character—Wayne, the lost provincial who drops in and out of *High Hopes*. Both are spectacularly inept; both serve as foils for some of the other characters, to show them as caring people; both allow the filmmaker a golden measure of irresponsibility. Despite the similarity, I don't think *Life Is Sweet* is as strong a film as *High Hopes*—it's less expansive, both in mood and in its portrayal of society. But thanks to the inclusion of Aubrey, there's still an uncommon richness of character in the film, an all-too-rare spontaneity. Sometimes in *Life Is Sweet*, things happen just for the hell of it—much as they do in real life. Wendy and Andy understand that. By the end, Nicola is starting to understand it, too. I wouldn't exactly call that comedy, but it does lift the spirit.

Another family, another corner of the world: *Overseas*, the feature-film debut of director Brigitte Roüan, is the story of three sisters in Algeria at the end of the colonial period. Zon (Nicole Garcia) is the eldest, married to a naval officer. Roüan has said in interviews that she based this character on her mother; she herself plays the middle sister, Malene, who marries a plantation owner. The youngest, Gritte (Marianne Basler), is supposed to marry as well, but she keeps backing out—even though the film dramatizes her engagement party not once but three times.

In fact, several episodes in the family's history get repeated, since *Overseas* tells about each sister in turn. At first, during the sequences devoted to Zon, the storytelling is elliptical. You understand that Zon fervently believes everything a good colonialist should and that her reward is a slow death; but her story is full of gaps and puzzles. When the story of Malene begins, those narrative mysteries start to clear up (some of them, anyway). More important, though, you start to see how one sister has influenced another. Zon clung desperately to the ideal of romantic love. Malene tries to live up to her example and winds up married to a good-for-nothing. Zon, maintaining the privileges of her class and skin color, kept herself isolated from the surrounding Arab world. Again, Malene tries to match her example—but since the work of running her husband's plantation falls entirely on her, she has to enter into an uneasy face-to-face relationship with her Arab laborers.

By the time the film moves on to Gritte, shock waves are reverberating backward and forward with each new detail; your understanding of the two older sisters keeps getting more complicated, while Gritte's story is developing into a surprise. Earlier, she'd seemed bland and inert compared with her sisters. Whereas Zon was sharply elegant and Malene behaved like a wiry dynamo, Gritte apparently had been the plump sensualist of the family, dreamy, indolent and indecisive. Wrong. In her own way, she turns out to be a rebel—though Roüan, being the clearheaded sort, sees that Gritte's rebellion is almost certain to end up muddled.

Overseas is the work of an unusually smart filmmaker—unusually self-assured, too, considering this is her debut—who offers you all manner of intellectual pleasures. You get sharp observations on sexual politics and world politics, as well as a narrative jigsaw puzzle to assemble in your head. But the film's crowning pleasure is that it plays like a very high-level soap opera. Roüan doesn't scant the romantic side of colonialism. That sounds horrible; but as a lived experience, rather than an abstract program of economic and political domination, colonialism could not have existed without manicured lawns, lavish houses, grinning men in gleaming white uniforms, gala evenings when a woman, no matter how heartbroken, could put on a fabulous gown. In *Overseas*, this romanticism is more than a frame for the story, more than an illusion to be debunked with bitter irony. It's part of the substance of these women's lives, even at their worst moments.

Thanks to the cinematography by Dominique Chapuis, the days are always blazing in *Overseas*, the nights velvety, the colors bright and crisp. What's most wonderful about the film, I think, is that these sensuous pleasures eventually seem to be intellectual as well. It's as if Roüan's memory and imagination, rather than

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the sunlight, were making the picture so vivid; as if the light in her head were always burning.

The good news about *Billy Bathgate*, Robert Benton's adaptation of the novel by E.L. Doctorow, is that it has the traditional virtues of an American movie. It's unpretentious; it's well crafted; it speeds along like a top-of-the-line 1935 Buick. Maybe it's not very fuel-efficient, and it lacks the sex appeal of something more sporty and modern; but whatever its faults, you have to admit they don't make 'em like this anymore.

A story of Depression-era gangsters as seen by a boy from the Bronx, who thinks it a great stroke of luck to be their apprentice, Doctorow's novel read like a Marxian fairy tale. Young Billy was an ideal free agent in the American economy, earning success through his wit, daring and good fortune. His desire to attach himself to Dutch Schultz was largely a matter of circumstance—a slum kid takes his opportunities where he finds them—but it also seemed to be a plausible business decision. To a would-be entrepreneur looking for a model, Schultz's methods were simply those of capitalism in general, only faster. The book's narrative conceit helped to put the point across: Telling the story of his youth from the perspective of middle age, Billy combined the ruthless clarity of a businessman-gangster with the amorality of a child.

In a film, it's all but impossible to capture that tone, even if you resort to voice-over. Think of Sissy Spacek's soundtrack narration in *Badlands*, which is the closest analogy I can imagine. It gave you a sense of the character's matter-of-factness, her moral and intellectual limitations—but that's only half of what you'd need to translate Doctorow's Billy to the soundtrack. So Benton and his screenwriter, Tom Stoppard, don't try. They wisely choose to portray Billy from the outside, while encouraging the audience to identify with him. He becomes likable in a conventional manner, which he certainly is not in the book. And something strange happens as a result: The story shifts from Marx to Freud.

If there is a core of meaning in *Billy Bathgate*—and some people I've spoken with have complained that there isn't—then you'll find it in the way Billy becomes involved in a makeshift, parodic new family, with Dutch Schultz (Dustin Hoffman) as the father and a slumming socialite, Drew (Nicole Kidman), as mother and Oedipal temptress. No doubt this theme would have come across more strongly had Benton cast a younger actor as Billy, to make him match the character in the novel. Loren Dean plays the role credibly—I like the way he conveys bravado, while having the jumpiness of someone who's been smacked across the face too often—but he probably wouldn't be carded in too many bars. When he escorts Drew into a fancy hotel, hardly anyone on screen bats an eye. But then, had Benton cast a kid in the role, he might not have gotten away with an R rating—and after all, this is a Disney picture. Early adolescent sex, especially of the heartless sort portrayed in the novel, had to be softened. Sex with an older, married woman had to be smoothed into a more formulaic mutual seduction. There's danger in the encounter—Drew and Billy are risking the wrath of Dutch Schultz—but not much kinkiness.

So Billy has been normalized, turned into an Everyboy who just happens to be poor and just happens to hang around with gangsters. The focus necessarily shifts onto the mythic, murderous father. (It can't very well shift onto the mother, because Nicole Kidman is a stick of furniture.) The closer the picture brings you

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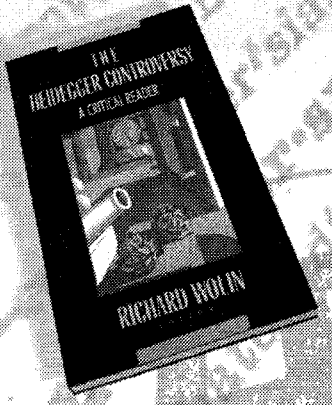

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to the figure of Dutch Schultz, the more you get an effect that's another hallmark of classic Hollywood filmmaking: the conflation of the star with the role.

Is this Dutch Schultz we're watching, isolated and desperate at the end of his career, or is it Dustin Hoffman, raging through a film set? Is *Billy Bathgate* about a gangster who is alternately affectionate and brutal toward a boy from the slums, or is it a documentary about the way Dustin Hoffman, a star who has become too familiar to be credible in his role, tries to dominate the fresh-faced Loren Dean? Some of the most exciting moments in *Billy Bathgate* are those in which the answer to those questions is most in doubt. Dutch/Dustin smiles, and we feel the gratitude of Billy/Loren at being recognized by the great man. Dutch/Dustin shoves the young man's bleeding face onto the floor, or screams angrily and makes him jump back, and we feel how Billy/Loren has to abase himself. It only adds to the psychological drama that the identity of Dutch Schultz himself is indeterminate. Early in the film, we learn that the Dutch Schultz we're watching took his name from a previous gangster; he's merely one in a possibly endless series of Dutch Schultzes. Later, his lieutenant Otto (played by the great character actor Steven Hill) advises Billy that Dutch, in his present circumstances, is merely a shadow of his former self: "You never saw the real Dutch Schultz," he says. Maybe we're not seeing the real Dustin Hoffman either, the actor who used to be able to disappear into his roles. So who is this man? All we can say is that he serves as the father—maybe not a Doctorow father, but one who is as dangerous and changeable as a father in Kafka.

Rumor had it that *Billy Bathgate* was going to be a disaster. From the first sequence—the part of the film that most fully re-creates the mood of the novel, with its air of uncanny menace—you can tell that the rumor was wrong. *Billy Bathgate* turns out to be a thoroughly watchable entertainment; a showcase for Nestor Almendros's rich cinematography and for Robert Benton's skill at montage; a strange and troubling agon for Dustin Hoffman. It is not a masterwork for the ages. But then, it's a poor society indeed that has room for masterpieces and nothing but. In our increasingly impoverished culture, *Billy Bathgate* keeps a tradition of enjoyable workmanship alive just a little longer. I'm not greedy. I'll take it. □

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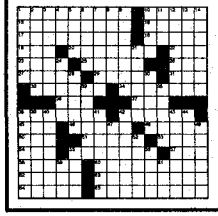

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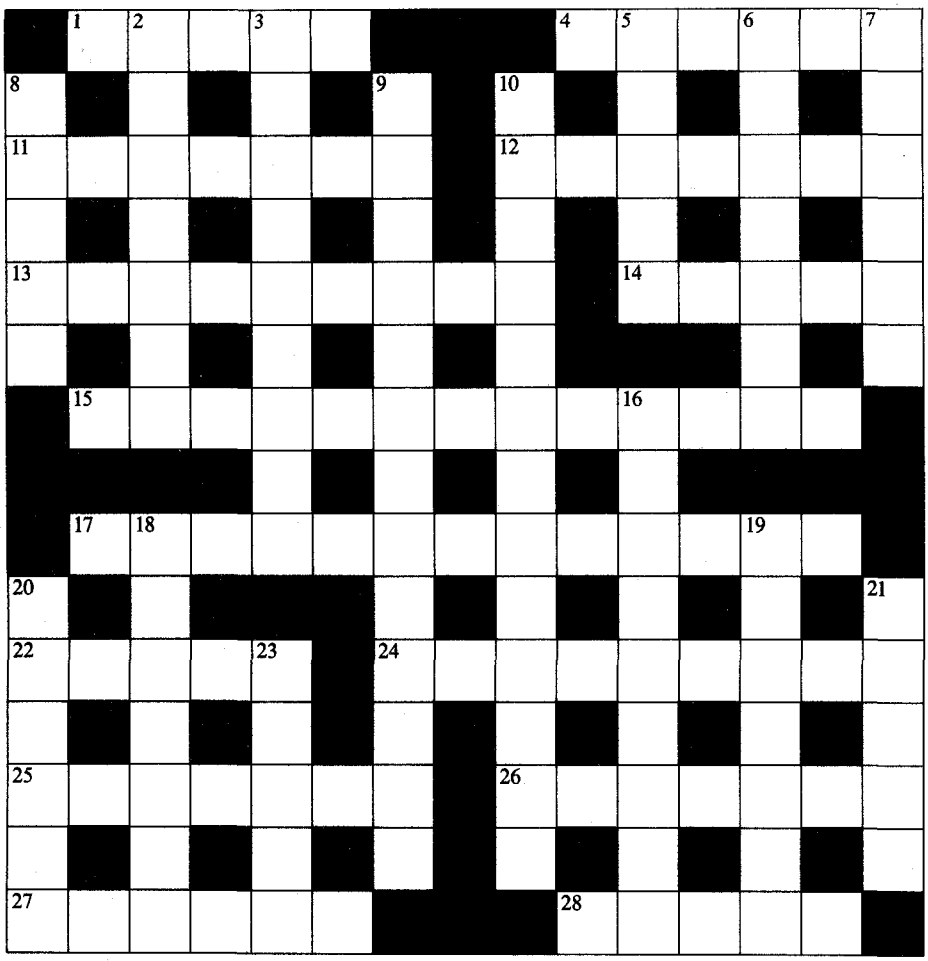

ACROSS

1 and 4 Our years in Germany with it, of French achievement, too! (Give up?) (5,6)
11 An important point of contact in developing a pansy variety, to the southeast. (7)
12 An obvious cutter of what some think the IRS does. (7)
13 A trifle expensive, if one thinks the grade is. (1,3,5)
14 Influenced, by the sound of it, to get leather, when undressed. (5)
15 Eager? (Those who don't think the same, sometimes do.) (5,2,6)
17 Corollary to B winning the war? (One continues to try without much hope in it.) (1,6,6)
22 A new lease, in support of such as Picasso. (5)
24 Perhaps the most famous one starts with an infinitive. (9)
25 A bee, in a sense, is indifferent to standards of behavior. (7)
26 Ninety degrees toward the rear? The Orient has to be! (7)
27 Flag officer? (Much lower in rank!) (6)
28 Employers in the USSR, disturbed about one point. (5)

DOWN

2 and 18 One might have taken them some time ago in order to make a better twist. (7,7)
3 Those who make taxes are almost the same as fakes, with less than a thousand placards. (9)
5 Pitchers that prove ma sheep butts rupees. (5)
6 A beginning should make no difference for this art enthusiast. (He's the tenth one to show it!) (7)
7 How one went to the airport, or got ready to take off? (6)
8 A sort of dive in Egypt? (Adam split for it!) (5)
9 One can't make a single statement to do it, or make a replica of one's personal spirit! (6,7)
10 In it, one might take the part of 8 down. (5,2,6)
16 Doesn't eat the chopped up tail inside, but such people accept almost anything! (9)
18 See 2
19 Postprandial drink? (7)
20 Does this imply that only women stay young forever in the household? (6)
21 Descriptive of 8 down, according to Pavlova. (5)
23 Proving one can't be standing up and distorting the truth at the same time? (5)

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